

L E T T E R S

F R O M

AN ENGLISH TRAVELLER

[MARTIN SHERLOCK, Esq.]

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH ORIGINAL
PRINTED AT GENEVA AND PARIS.

WITH NOTES.

A NEW EDITION, REVISED AND CORRECTED.

Rien n'est beau que le vrai, le vrai seul est aimable.

BOILEAU.

Nothing is beautiful but Truth,
And Truth alone is lovely.

L O N D O N,

PRINTED FOR J. NICHOLS, T. CADELL,
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L E T T E R S

F R O M

AN ENGLISH TRAVELLER

[MARTIN SHERLOCK, Esq.]

[Price Two Shillings and Six Pence.]

®

LETTERS

FROM

AN ENGLISH TRAVELLER

MARTIN BURECK

Printed by the University Press

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE EARL OF BRISTOL,

BISHOP OF DERRY.

MY LORD,

DEDICATIONS, in general, are so fulsome and heavy, that they disgust even the persons to whom they are addressed: As for me, I will not praise you, because every one praises you: I have seen many countries; and in every town where you have resided, I have heard a repetition of the same elogiums on the goodness of your heart, the sweetness of your manners, and the charms of your wit. The most respectable

and the most accomplished persons
 were those who praised you most.
 I beg your Lordship to accept this
 tribute as a proof of my esteem, and
 to believe that I am, with the most
 sincere attachment, and with the most
 profound respect,

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's most humble

And most obedient servant,

MARTIN SHERLOCK.

P R E F A C E

I could present to the publick two hundred letters; I offer them twenty, because I thought I should shew them more respect by publishing a hundred pages, which they might read twice, than by printing a thousand, of which they would never read half. As to *agrémens* of style, none will be found, for it is an Englishman who writes: In a plain style will be found some ideas and truth.

The notes between [] are added by the translator.

The author passing through Potsdam
sent this book to the King. His
Majesty honoured him with the
following answer.

*Monsieur de Sberlock, Je vous re-
mercie du livre que vous venez de
M'adresser. Il a trouvé l'accueil qu'il
mérite. Je desire même de revoir son
auteur, & vous vous rendrez pour
cét effet chez Moi, demain vers les
onze heures avant-midi. Ce sera M.
Général Major Comte de Goërtz qui
a ordre de vous y conduire & de vous
présenter, & sur ce Je prie Dieu
qu'il vous ait, Monsieur de Sberlock,
en sa sainte & digne garde.*

Potsdam, ce 19
Juillet, 1779.

FREDERIC.

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[I]

LETTERS

FROM AN
ENGLISH TRAVELLER.

LETTER I.

BERLIN, Oct. 10, 1777.

THE King of Prussia is every where known as a great king, a great warrior, and a great politician; but he is not every where known as a great poet and a *good man*. Marcus Aurelius, Horace, Machiavel, and Cæsar, have been his models, and he has almost surpassed them all. I have never heard of a human being that

B

was

was perfect; and this monarch also has his faults; but *take him for all in all*, he is the greatest man that ever existed.

At the beginning of his life he published his *Anti-Machiavel*, and this was one of the completest strokes of Machiavelism that ever he made. It was a letter of recommendation of himself that he wrote to Europe at the instant when he had formed the plan of seizing Silesia.

To his subjects he is the justest of sovereigns: to his neighbours he is the most dangerous of heroes; his neighbours shudder at him, his subjects adore him. The Prussians are proud of their Great Frederick, as they always style him. They speak of him with the utmost freedom, and
at

at the same time that they criticize severely *some* of his tastes, they give him the highest eulogiums. He was told that some one had spoken ill of him. He asked if that person had 100,000 men? He was answered, No. 'Very well,' said the king, 'I can do nothing; if he had 100,000 men, I would declare war against him.'

Of all the characters of the present age, that of this prince has been the most mistaken; and the reason is, that two parts of his character have been confounded, and only one judgement formed on two points, each of which requires a separate opinion. The King of Prussia has occasioned the death of some thousands of men; and the King of Prussia is a merciful, tender, and compassionate prince. This seems a

contradiction; and it is a certain truth. He must first be considered as a conqueror, where it is not permitted to listen to the voice of humanity. When heroism is out of the question, we must examine the man. It will be said that this is a subtlety. I deny it, and appeal to history: What clemency more acknowledged than that of Julius Cæsar? What conqueror has shed more blood?

I own to you, that, when I entered Prussia, I had some prejudices against the king: these are the reasons that made me change my opinion.

He was forced to marry the queen; and though he has never lived with her, she loves him, because he has always treated her with respect, and has always shewn her many little attentions.

tentions. She has a palace at Berlin, and another at Schenhausen, where she passes the summer. Her court, which she holds twice a week, is brilliant and numerous, because it is known that the king is pleased with the respect that is shewn her. She has some hesitation in her speech; but she is the best princess in the world, and the king esteems her highly.

The princess Amelia is oppressed with infirmities and years. She has lost the use of one arm and the sight of one eye. She has wit and an improved understanding; and the king never goes to Berlin for five hours but he passes three with his sister.

The following incident was related to me by her Royal Highness the

reigning Dutchess of Brunswick*: While she had the small-pox, the king went to see her; she was thought to be in great danger; he threw himself on his knees by her bed-side, kissed her hand, and bathed it with tears. What a moment for a Rubens to paint the most formidable monarch in Europe paying this tribute of sensibility to a sister whom he loved! And what a companion for the picture of Coriolanus†, at the instant when that haughty Roman was sacrificing to an emotion of tenderness his life, his glory, and his revenge!

[* Styled by Dr. Moore, in his late 'View of Society and Manners in France,' &c. the king's favourite sister.]

† The king has bespoke this picture; and it is now almost finished by the celebrated Battoni at Rome.

Man is a discontented animal; he loves to complain: the king's subjects complain of taxes, and I have never seen any subjects who do not complain of taxes. The Prussians complain less than any others, and the reason is evident: the government is even and steady, and the weight of the taxes does not alter, as in other countries; it is always the same. Men every where take pleasure in speaking ill of their sovereign: God knows there never was a better king than ours, and his subjects speak ill of him every day. To me therefore it is a very strong proof that the Great Frederick is good, that his subjects say little ill of him, and much in his commendation. But here is another proof much stronger: he has never

put a man to death*; and when I tell you that he lives without guards; I fancy you will allow that to be a proof of his feeling inwardly that he has never done an unjust action.

L E T T E R II.

BERLIN.

PLUTARCH and Shakspeare have shewn great men in their night-caps and flippers. I cannot shew you his Prussian Majesty in his night-cap, for he never wears one; he acquired a habit in his youth of sleeping bare-headed in order to harden himself. Nor has he any flippers, for as soon

[* The author must doubtless mean in time of peace, by the civil sword. In war, in battle, how many thousands have been put to death by him and his military executioners!]

as

as he leaves his bed he puts on his boots. It is known that he rises at four, that he goes to bed at nine, that he procrastinates nothing, that he is fond of jesting, that he eats a great deal of fruit, that he plays on the flute every evening, that he passes most of his time at Sans-souci in his old boots, and that he governs Europe.

I saw him three times; the two first were at the review at Potsdam; the sun shone bright, and 40,000 men were divided into two bodies to form a battle. An old general told me in the evening at supper at the Prince Royal's, that, if I had been in an engagement, I should not have had so perfect an idea of a battle as that which I had received. To pretend
to

to give you a description of it would be as absurd as impossible: read those of Homer and Tasso; all that they say is true, especially this stanza:

*In tanta il sol, che ne' celesti campi
Va più sempre avanzando, e in alto ascende,
L'armi percote, e ne trae fiamme, e lampi
Tremuli e chiari, onde le viste offende.
L'aria par di faville intorno avampi,
E quasi d'alto incendio in forma splende;
E co' fieri nitriti il suono accorda
Del ferro scosso, e le campagne afforda.* l. 73.

Mean time the sun above th' horizon gains
The rising circuit of th' ethereal plains;
The polish'd arms reflect his dazzling light,
And strike with flashing rays the aching fight.
Thick and more thick the sparkling gleams aspire,
Till all the champain seems to glow with fire;
While mingled clamours echo through the meads,
The clash of arms, the neigh of trampling steeds.

Hoole.

But

But it is one of those things which must be seen to have an idea of it. There are a thousand circumstances which produce an effect on the spectator, and none on paper. The instant of my seeing the enemy's army appear at a distance (for that of the king was on the ground before my arrival) made a strong impression on me; and from that moment, at every step which the two armies advanced towards each other, the expectation of the spectators was heightened, and the interest increased. The silence of their approach was Grecian *. The king's party was defeated; and the order which he maintained in his retreat is inconceivable. In two hours there

* *Οι δ' αὖρ' ἰσάν σιγῇ μέγα πάντες Ἀχαιοί.*

In solemn silence march'd the valiant Greeks.

was only ten minutes confusion: near the hill where I stood, there was an eminence covered with trees, which commanded the field of battle; each party was desirous of seizing this post, and some squadrons of cavalry came from both sides full gallop, in silence, till the instant of their entering the wood; they then gave loud shouts, and fought with swords and pistols: fresh troops came from each side to their assistance, and all shouted. The vivacity of this moment is inexpressible. As I know nothing of the art military, I cannot give you the particulars of any evolution; but the regularity and the quickness with which the Prussian soldier performs every thing, astonish the military of all other nations.

The

The battle ended, the imagination
saw these pictures of Tasso:

*Pien tutto il campo è di spezzate lance,
Di rotti scudi e di troncato arnese:
Di spade ai petti, alle squarciate pance
Altre confitte, altre par terra stese;
Di corpi altri supini, altri coi volti,
Quasi mordendo il suol, al suol rivolti.*

* *Giace il cavallo al suo signore appresso;
Giace il compagno appo il compagno estinto;
Giace il nemico appo il nemico; e spesso
Sul morto il vivo, il vincitor sul vinto.
Non v'è silenzio, e non v'è grido espresso;
Mà odi un non so che roco, e indistinto,
Frèmiti di furor, mormori d'ira,
Gemiti di chi langue, e di chi spira.*

XX. 50, 51.

O'erspread with shatter'd arms the ground ap-
pears,
With broken bucklers, and with shiver'd spears.
Here swords are stuck in hapless warriors kill'd,
And uselefs there are scatter'd o'er the field.

* It is a tradition among the Italian poets that this stanza cost Tasso ten months.

Here,

Here, on their face, the breathless bodies lie;
There turn their ghastly features to the sky.

Beside his lord the courser press'd the plain;
Beside his slaughter'd friend the friend is slain:
Foe near to foe; and on the vanquish'd spread
The victor lies; the living on the dead!
An undistinguish'd din is heard around,
Mix'd is the murmur, and confus'd the sound:
The threats of anger, and the soldier's cry,
The groans of those that fall, and those that die.

Hoole.

The imagination, I say, formed
these pictures, and the heart congratulated itself that they were but imaginary.

If I had great curiosity to see two
armies engaged, I had much more
to see the king. At length he came:
he was not so tall as I expected; this
circumstance excepted, he answered
all the ideas that I had formed of him:

his air and countenance bespoke the king, the hero, and the man of genius. Thinking I could never see enough of him, I kept close to him all the way to Sans-fouci. A great crowd followed him; some peasants waited to see him at the entrance of his palace, and cried, 'Long live the king!' He pulled off his hat several times to them. This was twice that he deceived me; the first time by his stature, the second by his politeness.

L E T T E R III.

BERLIN.

THE next day there was another battle: the manœuvres were different; but I did not understand them. Before I went to it I visited the
king's

king's apartments. You go through the eating-parlour and the concert-room into the bed-chamber. I asked the Swiss, "Which was the king's chamber?"—"This." I expected a magnificent bed. There was a fine alcove at the end of the room, but no bed in it.—"Where is the bed?"—"There." Behind a little skreen, in a corner, was a small bed, very narrow, with curtains of green silk; this was his. On the other side of the castle were several beds in the same taste, then occupied by his generals. The carpet on which he steps when he gets out of bed, is very coarse. There was another small couch, where sometimes a page sleeps when the king is ill, and three or four tables covered with books and papers.

I asked

I asked my conductor (a Swiss wit, who has lived eighteen years with his majesty) "where was the king's wardrobe?" He replied, 'on his back*.'

The last time of my seeing him was at Berlin. He came thither to receive the adieus of the Baron de Swieten, minister from their Imperial Majesties, and to give audience to the new minister the Count de Cobenzl†.

[* Dr. Moore has given a list of the king's cloaths; viz. two blue coats, faced with red, the lining of one a little torn; two yellow waistcoats, a good deal soiled with Spanish snuff; three pair of yellow breeches, and a suit of blue velvet, embroidered with silver, for grand occasions.]

† I had not the honour of knowing this gentleman, as I left Berlin two days after his arrival. But his cousin, the Count de Cobenzl, who attended the emperor in his travels, is one of the most amiable and interesting characters in Germany.

The foreign ministers, the persons who were to be presented, and the military, were all that were at court. We were ten English: the king spoke to the first and the last, not on account of their situation, but because their names struck him. The first was major Dalrymple*: To him the king said, 'You have been presented to me before?'—"I ask your majesty's pardon: it was my uncle." Mr. Pitt was the last. The king, 'Are you a relation of lord Chatham?' "Yes, Sire."—"He is a man whom I highly esteem."

He then went to the foreign ministers, and talked more to prince Dolgoroucki, the Russian ambassador, than

* Author of "Travels through Spain and Portugal in 1774."

to any other. In the midst of his conversation with this prince, he turned abruptly to Mr. Elliot, the English minister, and asked him the name of the duchess of Kingston. This transition was less Pindaric than it appears; he had just been speaking of the court of Petersburg, and that lady was then there.

L E T T E R IV.

BERLIN.

THERE never was a fat soldier seen in any country; but the king of Prussia has not a fat serjeant. A profound knowledge of the œconomy of finance is one of the points in which this prince excels; it is also

one of the reasons why his troops seldom grow fat. The money which other sovereigns expend on mistresses, pomp, hunting-parties, &c. he employs on things that are necessary, and in rewarding merit. During the time that I was at Berlin, the artillery was exercised for a fortnight: an officer of that corps told me, that there was consumed every day 100 louis d'ors worth of gunpowder. The king is not lavish of his bounties; but his generosity to general Leschwitz, to the widow of colonel Quintus*, and to many other persons of merit, is well

[* A favourite officer whom the king romanised (we cannot say christened) by the name of *Quintus Icilius*, on account of his profound knowledge of the Greek and Roman tactics. His real name was Charles Guischard.]

known.

known. Every officer with whom you converse will give you some fresh instance of the liberality of his master.

I am fond of my subject, and I could write to you a long time of the Great Frederick; but after relating a little anecdote, I will say a word of his poetry, and then we will proceed to Dresden.

Two days after my return from Potsdam, Count ****, a French traveller, who lodged at my hotel, asked my leave to visit me. We talked of the city, of the manœuvres, of the king. At ten o'clock at night he entered my apartment:—"My dear 'friend,' said he, (he had seen me for half an hour that morning) 'I am 'come to take leave of you.'—" Why "so?"—"The king has just requested

' me to quit the town, and I know not
 ' the reason, unless it be, that when I
 ' walk the streets, I take the plan of
 ' any building that strikes me.'—"Has
 " the king said anything particular of
 " you?" 'No,' replied he briskly,
 ' he has said nothing ill of me, but
 ' he thinks the more; I have sent
 ' for horses, and I set out in half an
 ' hour.' "But," said I, "I do not see
 " the necessity of your setting out in a
 " night like this" (it rained violently);
 " you may wait till to-morrow." 'Par-
 ' don me,' replied he, ' his majesty
 ' may change his mind, to-morrow
 ' perhaps he may request me to stay*.'
 This foreigner was not known by any
 one, not even by his own minister; he

* He was apprehensive of being sent to Span-
 daw.

seemed

seemed well educated, and was about forty.

When a poet has a richness of ideas and of expression, every time that we read him we discover new beauties: this is the case with Horace and with the king of Prussia. There is not, most certainly, an author in the French language who has more thoughts, or more vigorous thoughts, than this prince. All his productions spring from a strong and brilliant imagination, always regulated by a solid judgment, which, in my opinion, constitutes the perfection of genius.

In all his works the most sage philosophy and the profoundest morality are blended with the most poignant wit and the happiest sallies. When his subjects admit of it, his

style is no less poignant than emphatical. He has emulated Horace, and he has been able to equal him even in his best pieces; for in many respects the Pindar of the North would be dishonoured by comparing him with the Latin poet. Horace has not a more sincere admirer than myself, but there are many of his works which I cannot read without disgust. One cannot find a single middling composition of the King-Poet; and no enthusiast of Horace will deny that he has many. One cannot find in this prince any mean or indecent passage; Horace abounds with things that are vulgar and offensive. You will answer, that the souls of the Monarch and of Horace were different, their education different, and their situations

situations in life different; this confirms my assertion. I will not always determine in favour of his versification; but in strength and vivacity of colouring Rubens does not surpass him.

He has written an epistle *on Travelling**, in order to prevent the young Germans from going to ruin themselves at Paris and London; in these three verses he speaks of one of those gentlemen † at his return :

[* Addressed to Count Rottembourg.]

† I cannot help here mentioning a story which I heard at Paris of a young German traveller. He had been told that the Venetian ambassador was to make his entry at court, and that it was a magnificent sight: he flew to Versailles, he arrived at the chapel-door, from whence he saw the chancellor *coming out* in a long blue mantle: he asks his neighbour, " Pray, Sir, is that *cardinal in blue* the Venetian ambassador making his *entry?* "

*De stupide qu'il fut, il est devenu fâs,
Et jouant l'étourdi sans pouvoir jamais l'être,
C'est un lourdaut badin qui fait le petit-maitre.*

From stupid dolt he grows an errant fool,
Acting, not being, a blunderhead complete,
The waggish dunce at length becomes a fop.

How many originals of more countries
than one does this portrait represent!

LETTER V.

BERLIN.

LIGHT and heat are every where
diffused through the works of
the philosopher of Sans-souci. In two
large volumes of his poetry there is
not one barren page; and what makes
them truly precious is, that every
page breathes the love of humanity.

I foresee your objections; and I again demand one opinion for war, and another for peace. No man ever knew the human heart better than Shakspeare; no man ever drew a character better. This is what he puts into the mouth of an amiable hero;

In peace there's nothing so becomes a man
As gentleness and mild humanity;
But when the blast of war blows in our ears,
Let us be tigers in our fierce deportment.

Henry V.

You would think that Shakspeare meant to speak of the king of Prussia.

Read his odes *on War* and *on the Troubles of the North*, and then judge of the poet and the man:

[When

[When will thy frantic rage, with ruthless hand,
 Bellona, cease to desolate the land?
 Why do we see on every plain and flood
 Such torrents lavish'd of heroic blood?
 O'er all the earth, with unresisted sway,
 Sword, fire, confusion, plunder, famine, reign,
 Nor can the boundless ocean aught survey
 But wrecks of ships destroy'd, and corse of the slain.
 Say, does this fiend, with front of brass endued,
 Of blood insatiate, though with blood imbued,
 This fiend of war, the world in fetters hold,
 Only to range and waste it uncontroul'd?
 Old Charon's wherry such enormous weight
 Ne'er yet sustain'd, nor were the fatal sheers
 So oft employ'd, of unrelenting Fate,
 To snap the vital threads that hold our warriors
 years.]

Inhuman Discord, red with carnage, shakes
 Her flaming torch, and irritates her snakes,
 And, fond of chaos, with eternal strife
 Embroils all nature, and imbitters life:
 Man'serring steps from gulph to gulph she leads,
 And death, despair, and treason, all the crimes
 Which follow and avenge such cruel deeds,
 O'erspread with cypress all our desolated climes.]

What

* What transports seize my soul! what sudden fires!
 Some god my senses steals, some god inspires;
 'Tis Phœbus' self, his heav'n-born genius deigns
 To teach my feeble voice immortal strains.

Let all the world an awful silence keep,

Ye kings, ye people, listen to my lay,
 And let awhile your frantic fury sleep,
 To hear the truths I sing, to hear them and obey.

Ye judges of mankind, their gods by birth,

Ye proud oppressors of this wretched earth,

Though by your hands dire thunderbolts are
 thrown,

Though in your chains these captive people
 groan;

Restrain the rigour of resistless force:

These are your children, feel what fathers
 feel:

From all their bosoms, stabb'd without remorse,
 Streams your own vital flood, and stains the mur-
 d'rous steel.

As a good shepherd, provident and wise,

Defends his darling flock, with watchful eyes,

From the wolf's ravenous jaws, with gore im-
 brued,

Or the fierce lion, prowling for his food,

[* Mr. Sherlock has quoted only the four following
 stanzas; but the translator has given the whole ode.]

When

When from the wood the tyrant flies, their
fears

Remov'd, they soundly sleep or safely feed,
And though his sheep with fondling hand he
shears,

Yet ne'er beneath his knife the harmless victims
bleed.

A tender monarch, like this shepherd swain,
Humane in counsels, in designs humane,
For public good alone prolongs his days,
And counts his years by deeds deserving praise:
Wreaths stain'd with blood he nobly scorns to
wear ;

But to his virtues future glory owes ;
Such was that ancient, that heroic pair,
AURELIUS, TITUS thus to deathless honours rose.

[Abhor'd be these intestine wars, these brands
So widely scatter'd by Ambition's hands :
See ! all the universe in ruins lies ;
Earth is a tomb of vast stupendous size :
What tragic scenes this theatre disgrace !

Europe against her sons, with step-dame hate,
Leads forth astonish'd Asia's powerful race,
To urge with speedier course the direful work of
fate.

Barbarians

Barbarians swarming from Siberia's coasts,
 Assassins nurs'd amidst eternal frosts,
 Caspians and Tartars, join'd in dread array,
 I see, retain'd in Dutch and German * pay:
 This savage rage what Dæmon can inspire!

Europe no more your fury can sustain,
 With fierce dissension other worlds to fire,
 A lust for fighting fields transports you o'er the
 main.

From your bright mansion in yon azure sky,
 Goddess on whom for bliss we all rely,
 So long desir'd, descend, O lovely Peace!
 Close Janus' dreadful gates, bid Discord cease;
 All interest, envy, banish; and restore
 To worth, to arts, that fame, that life they
 want;

Then we, amidst our laurels stain'd with gore,
 Thy myrtles and thy olives joyfully will plant.]

His *Art of War* is his master-piece,
 and the longest of his works. You
 will there find the most lively images,

[* The author might with much more reason have
 said British! This seems to fix the date of the ode to
 the year 1748, when the Russians were marching to
 Flanders, which hastened the peace.]

the

the boldest and most judicious metaphors, a pencil always manly, always majestic, and an impetuosity in the style which is irresistible.

When one thinks of all the proofs which this prince has given, in war and in politics, of the fertility of his imagination, and of the solidity of his judgment; when one remembers that he has always fed his mind with the most perfect productions of the ancient philosophers and poets; and when we know that he has added to this whatever could be found in the society of the most enlightened men and the first wits of his age; we shall no longer be astonished at the variety of merit that is found in his compositions. Accept, great king, these just encomiums; I should not have so highly applauded

applauded your talents, if I were not fully persuaded of the goodness of your heart.

*Reçois l'éloge pur, l'hommage mérité ;
Je le dois à ton nom, comme à la vérité.*

Art de la Guerre.

Receive this pure applause, this homage due
To your great name, because I know 'tis true.

Read his *Epistle to his Sister of Bareith, on her Illness*, and see whether every verse does not flow from a tender and feeling heart.

It will be said that there are faults in his poetry; I leave them for the Zoiluses to point out; and I shall close my letter with his address to young soldiers at the conclusion of his *Art of War*.

*Si votre cœur aspire à la sublime gloire,
Sachez vaincre, et sur-tout user de la victoire.
Le plus grand des Romains, par ses succès divers,
Le jour qu'à son pouvoir il soumit l'univers,
Sauva ses ennemis dans les champs de Pharsale.*

*Voyez à Fontenoy, Louis dont l'âme égale,
Douce dans ses succès, soulage les vaincus,
C'est un Dieu bienfaisant dont ils sont secourus;
Ils baissent en pleurant la main qui les désarme,
Sa valeur les soumet, sa clémence les charme,
Dans le sein des fureurs la bonté trouve lieu,
Si vaincre est d'un Heros, pardonner est d'un Dieu.*

*To heights of glory if your heart aspires,
Know how to conquer, and your conquest use:
The greatest, most successful † Roman chief,
On that fam'd day when he subdu'd the world,
Sav'd ev'n his foes in dire Pharsalia's field.*

*Lewis with equal mind at Fontenoy,
Mild in success, his vanquish'd foes consoles;
Like a good deity his aid he gives:*

*With tears they bathe the hand that has dis-
arm'd them;*

*His valour conquers, and his mercy charms:
With goodness war's dire horrors he allays;
Heroes may vanquish, but 'tis God forgives.*

* Comme politique, ecrivain, et conquérant.

† As a politician, a writer, and a conqueror.

LETTER

LETTER VI.

DRESDEN.

THE country of Saxony is very beautiful, the city of Dresden very pretty, and the court one of the most amiable in Germany; strangers no where receive greater civilities: the women are mild, lively, and witty; the climate is fine; the environs pleasant; the fare delicious: it is indeed a charming country, and the Saxons would be too happy if they had not a hero for their neighbour. Ah! dreadful is the neighbourhood of a hero or a volcano! The situation of Dresden resembles that of Portici; and the inhabitants tremble at a menace of Frederick, like those of Portici at a rumbling of Vesuvius. An

old woman spoke to me of the bombardment of the city in the last war, with the same horror* of recollection, and almost in the same terms, as an old man at Portici spoke to me of the terrible eruption in 1768.

Nothing gives so perfect an image of war as the lava. Imagine a rich country covered with vines, pastures, and corn: bursts forth a torrent of fire, and in an instant the most brilliant landscape is changed into the most dismal picture that nature can present. This is the history of an eruption of Vesuvius: it is that of the Palatinate set on fire by Turenne.

Travellers in general make too short a stay at Dresden, and they are in the wrong. It is a country highly

* *Mens meminisse horret.*

interesting

interesting to all who are fond of natural history, pictures, and the beauties of nature of every kind. If the Prussians are the Macedonians of Germany, the Saxons are its Athenians. I have scarcely seen a country where there is more taste, or more chearful and agreeable society.

It is at the Vatican that we learn to admire the master-pieces of Raphael; it is at Dresden that we learn to value the pictures of Corregio. Raphael is almost universally acknowledged as the monarch of the picturesque kingdom. A consular government would please me better; I would wish him to have Corregio for his colleague. I know that I shall have all the demi-connoisseurs against me, and I will tell them the reason; either they

have not seen the most beautiful paintings of this master, or they have seen them superficially. His best works are at Parma and Dresden, and these are two cities that the traveller fees post. He passes three mornings perhaps in this gallery; he wishes to see every thing, and consequently sees nothing. It is the same repetition at Parma; and then he arrives at Rome. In all the companies where he goes, when painting is the subject, he hears no one named but Raphael. If a foreigner mentions Corregio, the Romans say, that he has great merit; but they do not feel what they say; for they have only seen some indifferent pictures of his that are at Rome: these pictures they compare with the master-pieces of Raphael; and

and you may guess their inference. The truth is, that they esteem Corregio as many modern philosophers adore Newton, by hear-say. To determine right, the *Night** should be placed beside the *Transfiguration*; the *Magdalen*†, or the *Venus*‡, by the *Galatea*; the *St. Jerom*, the *St. George*,

[* The famous *Notte di Corregio*, a nativity, is in the duke's palace at Modena: It is so far a night-piece as that all the light of the picture flows from the infant, who seems perfectly to shine. . . . This thought has been followed by great numbers of others. *Wright*.

The late general Guise, equally famous for his oaths and his connoisseurship, used to swear that this picture alone would illuminate a dark room.]

[† This is also at Modena. It is a *Magdalen* lying alone and reading, with her head raised up and supported by her right hand. It is most highly finished, but rather over laboured. This famous picture is closeted up, and when shewn is brought forth with great solemnity. *Wright*.]

[‡ An inestimable picture in the possession of Sir William Hamilton.]

believe

or the *St. Sebastian*, beside the *School of Athens*, and the other pictures of the Vatican.

The Romans are not good judges of painting; they determine well of certain parts. In every thing relating to composition and design their judgment is sure; and in those two points Raphael has no equal. As to colouring they know little of it: accustomed to consider Raphael as a perfect model, they think his colouring also perfect; but the falshood of this idea is too notorious for me to mention it. I do not pretend to talk of painting like an artist; but I have studied pictures much, and I shall always think that one of the first objects of painting is to deceive the eye, and to make the spectator believe

believe that the figures which are on the canvass are not there; in this part of the art Corregio is unrivalled. The magic of his pencil absolutely detaches his figures from the cloth; and, with this relief, they have a softness* to which no painter has ever approached. Nothing can be farther from my thoughts than to detract from the merit of Raphael; it is too well established; and if I could prove that he had none, I do not see that this would add to the reputation of Corregio. All that I ask is to be allowed that there are two fine eyes and two fine eyes; which travellers will not allow, for the reason that I have mentioned,

* *Moëlleux* in French; *morbidezza* in Italian.

their

their having formed their taste at Rome, where Corregio is not known. We shall have another reason for extolling Corregio, when we compare his situation with that of Raphael. Poor and unconnected, he lived in a small town, where he had no master but his genius, no model but nature, no attendants but the Graces, and the necessity of procuring bread for his family, to incite him. Behold Raphael at Rome, patronized by the sovereign, courted (in consequence) by princes and cardinals, hoping to become a cardinal himself, surrounded by the works of the Greeks, and by great artists his rivals, who, by their criticisms, at once stimulated and improved him. What advantages over the poor and

amiable Corregio! who was obliged to go on foot to Parma, carrying on his back those *chef d'oeuvres* of which one at present makes the riches of a cabinet.

No painter ever designed like Raphael; no painter knew the *clair-obscur* so well as Corregio: Raphael is always correct and noble; Corregio has often negligences: Raphael took many ideas from the ancient statues and bas-reliefs; Corregio pillaged only nature: Raphael has all the majestic, Corregio all the amiable, graces: The question cannot be decided; Raphael is Juno with the girdle of Venus; Corregio is Venus herself.

There is a saying of this painter which has always pleased me: The Bolognese had desired Raphael to paint them

them a picture; he gave them the celebrated St. Cecilia *. The fame of this work brought Corregio to Bologna to see it; after gazing on it for half an hour in a profound silence, he said, '*And I too am a painter.*' Yes, enchanting artist, you might well say so; and while men trust their eyes and feelings, many will be of your opinion. This exclamation is admirable, it shews me the man. It is a superior genius who sees without jealousy the master-piece of a contemporary, who dares to do him justice, and who, at the same time, sensible of his own merit, exclaims with a noble and modest simplicity, '*And I have also talents.*'

[* This picture is in the church of St. Giovanni in Monte. The Saint, enraptured with the harmony of a choir of angels, dashes all her musical instruments against the ground. *Keysser.*]

This

This struck Montesquieu in the same manner: "When I have seen *, says he, what so many great men in France, in England, and in Germany, have writ before me, I have been in admiration, but I have not lost my courage; and I too am a painter †, exclaimed I with Corregio."

LETTER VII.

VIENNA, March 3, 1778.

HOW rich is the universe in delights! How many pleasures may a virtuous and prudent man enjoy in his travels! If his view be to seek for amiable and enlightened cha-

* Preface to the *Spirit of Laws*.

† Ed anch' io son pittore.

racters, he will find them every where;
 and if he knows how to value them,
 they will receive him well. Vienna
 has its beautiful fides; the national
 character is good, and those whose
 education is the least cultivated, may
 there be safely trusted. Its air is
 healthy, sharp, dry, and very cold.
 The ideas which most strike foreigners
 are the affability of the court, the
 magnificence of the entertainments,
 and the beauty of the fair sex. Three
 days after my arrival, I was at a ball,
 where there were thirty young ladies,
 all handsome. They dress with taste,
 and dance well. The best dancer
 was the countess Dirheim. She is a
 canonefs, and the most beautiful ca-
 nonefs that ever was. Of all the
 persons I have ever seen, she is at
 first

first sight the most striking. A painter
could find only one fault in her, and
that fault is a small one. If I were
a poet, I would here draw her picture;
but Ariosto has done it; it is his
Alcina:

*Di persona era tanto ben formata,
Quanto mè' finger san pittori industri, &c.*

A shape whose like in wax 'twere hard to frame,
Or to express by skill of painters rare, &c.

You never saw so pretty a mouth;
this stanza seems made on purpose
to paint it:

Sotto quel sta, quasi fra due vallette,

La bocca spansa di vario cimabris

Quive due filze son di perle elette,

Che chiude ed apre una bello de dolce labro;

Quindi escon le cortesi parollette

Da render molle ogni cor rozza e scabro;

Quivi si forma quel soave riso,

Ch' apre a sua posta in terra il Paradiso.

vii. 13.

Conjoin'd

Conjoin'd to which in due and comely space
 Doth stand the mouth stain'd with vermillion
 hue,
 Two rows of precious pearl serve, in their place,
 To shew and shut a lip right fair to view:
 Hence come the courteous words, and full of grace,
 That mollify hard hearts, and make them new:
 From hence proceed those smilings sweet and nice,
 That seem to make an earthly Paradise.

Harrington.

The Princess Charles Lichtenstein,
 the Countess Paar, and the Princess
 Lignoski, are the three prettiest women
 in Germany; the Countess Wurm-
 brand, and the Countess Buquoy, at
 Vienna, and the Countess Lofs at
 Dresden, are the three finest German
 women I have seen. Perhaps there
 is a more beautiful head than that
 of the Countess of Wurmbrand in
 Paradise, but on earth there certainly
 is not.

As

As to wit, the Countess Bergen has unquestionably the most; the Countess Degenfield, wife of the Dutch envoy, is highly accomplished and amiable; and the Baroness of Rheinfach has as much real merit as I have seen in my travels, a great deal of wit, an improved understanding, and a good heart; she is a charming woman in every sense of the word.

You will see in Prince Kaunitz a superior genius, and one of the greatest men of the age. He gives a most gracious reception to the English, and has some of them every day at his table. His house is open every evening, and there you will always find part of the diplomatic body, which is here very numerous and respectable. Monseigneur Gerampi, the

Pope's Nuncio, is full of good-nature and erudition. He is much beloved at Vienna and at Rome, and with reason. There is not an Englishman, or any man who speaks truth, who passes through Vienna, without doing justice to Sir Robert Keith. He is indisputably one of the first geniuses in Europe: his soul and his understanding appear in his eye; it is a clear, quick, penetrating, firm eye. Few men possess like him the secret of pleasing every one.

The household of the Baron de Breteuil is royally established. We were five and twenty English, and this ambassador invited us all every week of the Carnival to a ball and a supper. There were always more than 200 persons, excellent cheer, French wines,

wines, Tokay, &c. &c. There is no house here more agreeable than his. No idea, I confess, has given me more offence, in many young travellers of different nations whom I have met, than that of not doing justice to persons of distinguished merit. This mode of acting appears to me base and unworthy of a man well born, even if those persons were unknown to us; but it is the height of ingratitude to speak ill of those who have shewn us civilities, to disown their favours, or even to be silent when an occasion offers of speaking of them.

Vienna is perhaps the best city in Europe to teach a young traveller the manners of the great world: at his arrival he will be introduced into all

the best houses; and if he is an Englishman, he will meet with the most flattering reception, because Sir Robert Keith, who is universally esteemed, accompanies him every where; but every foreigner is well received, especially by the ladies, who are very well bred, and extremely amiable.

You will afterwards be entertained according to your desert; if you are simple in your manners, and noble in all your proceedings, you will be enchanted with Vienna; and if, when you leave the country, you do not make its elogium, you will be your own satirist.

LETTER

L E T T E R VIII.

VIENNA.

THERE are here a German theatre and an Italian one, both bad. There is only one woman* who has merit. Though she has neither beauty nor air, she plays with such judgment, and has such expression in her looks, her actions, and her cadence, that she even interests those who are unacquainted with the language.

You will here see some singular sights; the procession of the knights of the golden fleece is superb; the Hungarian guards, who come to court on New-year's-day, are the most brilliant troop in Europe; but the most

* *La Sacco.*

striking sight, and which is really beautiful, is the course of *traineaux*. The Archdutchess of Milan, the Archdutchess Mary-Elizabeth, and the Princess Schwarzenberg, were conducted by the Archduke of Milan, the Archduke Maximilian, and Prince Albert of Saxony: they were followed by twenty-five ladies, all in crimson velvet with a very broad gold lace; the dresses of the knights were of a sky-blue velvet, laced like those of the ladies. There were some equipages that cost a thousand guineas. On each side of the horse were two running-foot-men, dressed with an elegance suitable to the equipage.

This is one of the happy moments in the life of a Viennese lady; it is the moment in which she makes the
most

most pompous display of her riches and of her charms. Embellished with all her graces, her head studded with diamonds, her bosom uncovered, she seems a Venus in her car; and knowing that she is the object of the admiration of some thousands of persons, she shews the satisfaction of her heart by a perpetual smile. In every country the fair go dressed to public places to be seen*: but here the women make the show; and the pleasure with which this idea inspires them is so lively, that it makes them entirely forget the rigours of the season. It is not so with the poor knight; having no enjoyment, but that of admiring his fair-one's *chignon*, he perishes with cold: in fact men have

* *Spectatum [ornatæ] veniunt, spectentur ut ipsæ.*

been frequently obliged to retire before the expiration of these two hours, on account of the severity of the cold; but no woman was ever known to complain of it.

The course begins in the great square before the Imperial palace; they take several turns there, and after traversing the principal streets of the city, they return thither to finish it. The ground of snow, on which this moving picture winds, relieves its splendor extremely, and makes the sight the richest and most dazzling that can be conceived.

But the sight that gives a foreigner the most pleasure at Vienna, is that which he sees in the anti-chamber of prince Kaunitz, once a week, after dinner: it is a concourse of all the
indigent

indigent who are in need of protection, and who come thither assured of finding it: the ear of this prince is never shut to the complaints of the poor, and his hand is always ready to give them assistance.

L E T T E R . IX.

VIENNA.

YOU should not leave Vienna without seeing Metastasio: he is a lively old man and an agreeable companion. He is the greatest poet that Italy has produced since Tasso: I would have said the greatest that she has ever had, were he not a living author; on which account he must not be praised too much. Read
 I his

his *Canzonettes*, in particular that which begins *Grazie agl' inganni tuoi* *, and say, what Italian poet has written with so much purity, so much elegance, and so much grace? He embellishes whatever he touches, and appears to me absolutely the first that has established true principles of good taste in Italy. In those little compositions there is a native beauty and freshness in the colouring, a simplicity and delicacy in the thoughts and sentiments, that makes them enchanting.

Metastasio is not wanting in any one of the requisites that constitute a great poet. Born with sensibility,

[* *The Indifferent*. See three good translations of this Ode, in the second volume of Doddsley's Collection, by Richard Roderick, esq. the Rev. Mr. Seward, and an unknown hand. A fourth, with still more spirit and closeness, by Isaac Pacatus Shard, esq. is in the sixth volume of Nichols's Collection.]

with

with a profound and penetrating understanding, and with a lively and fertile imagination, he possessed all that he could derive from nature: at twelve years of age he went into the family of the celebrated Gravina: that learned critic, who saw the *tinsel*, the *glittering extravagances*, and the *barren abundance* of the Italian writers, shewed Metastasio that the true source of a sure taste was the Greek authors. The young pupil adopted this idea, examined the principles of those poets, and on their principles he has written all his life. Italy is little calculated at present to inspire sublime sentiments; it gives a perfect knowledge of the tender passions: in Italy he passed his youth; there he learned to write his *Demetrio*,
his

his *Olympiade*, and his *Demofoonte*. At the age of twenty-five he went into Germany; his residence at Vienna, and the reading of Corneille, elevated his mind; he wrote his *Regulo* and his *Clemenza di Tito*. No author has better understood Horace; few poets have so well executed his ideas:

Scribendi recte sapere est et principium et fons:

Sound judgment is the ground of writing well:

Roscommon.

He studied philosophy; and he did not begin to treat of a subject till he had thoroughly examined it.

Omne supervacuum pleno de pectore manat,

All superfluities are soon forgot,

Roscommon.

is an observation, of which he felt the wisdom; and he has written with as much rapidity as precision.

He

He felt the value of Boileau as well as of Horace; and he has never swerved from those great principles:

Tout doit tendre au bon-sens;

Rien n'est beau que le vrai, le vrai seul est aimable.

Let sense be ever in your view;

Nothing is beautiful that is not true;

The true alone is lovely.

The persons who have composed music for his verses, and those who sing and repeat them, are best able to judge of the harmony of his poetry: in these two classes there is but one opinion from Petersburg to Naples.

No Italian has so well developed the emotions of the soul, nor succeeded equally in moving and interesting his reader. Metastasio rose to the sublime; but he was born tender; and one may say, without wronging any

any nation, that few of their poets have so well painted the tender passions, or made such lively impressions on the heart.

When one examines his works well, and compares them with the Gothic productions of Dante, with the absurdities of Ariosto, with the extravagances of Marini, and with the puerilities of Tasso, one is astonished at the decision of the Italians: they prefer Tasso to Metastasio, and Ariosto to Tasso; but there is no disputing with the Italians upon poetry; they deny all the principles admitted in every other country.

I am far from speaking here against the talents of the Italians; they have perhaps more than any other nation in Europe; but these talents are uncultivated,

cultivated, and of many reasons the most essential is, that there are no Mæcenases.

I hope you do not imagine that I deny that Dante had an astonishing genius, and that he has some passages of the highest sublime; that the genius of Ariosto was easy and fertile; that no one tells a story better; that he has some descriptions exquisitely beautiful; and that his *Orlando Furioso* is a poem full of gaiety and variety. Marini had a vast imagination; but he is madder than Ariosto.

I am only the friend of truth; and if I do not deny the merit of these poets, much less shall I deny that of Tasso. Nature perhaps was less generous to him than to them; but his poems would be placed above theirs

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at Paris, at London, and at Athens. That the *Jerusalem Delivered* has many defects, that it has false thoughts, some playing upon words, and much tinsel, is certain; but it is also certain that it has much gold. The subject is most happy; the conduct of the poem in general is sage; its march, majestic; its language, noble and well supported, and its versification always beautiful: it has the pathetic, and it has the sublime. The *Aminta* is a master-piece of elegance and simplicity, and is much more perfect than the *Gerusalemme Liberata*.

Metastasio seems to me to have more natural talents than Tasso, all his beauties, and many more, and none of his faults. He satisfies the understanding, he delights the ear,
he

he enchants the imagination, he captivates the heart; and for these reasons he will always be the poet of men of sense, the poet of women, and the poet of all persons who have taste.

LETTER X.

THE HAGUE, *June 10, 1777.*

THE face of the country in Holland is singular, and very striking for three days: after that time, one sees nothing but the same flat repetition of fields always level, intersected by canals which are all alike; and on those canals barks all made on the same model. Every traveller should pass through Holland, as the ideas which it gives are found no where else, and

F

he

he will soon collect them. Throughout Holland the four elements are bad; the cardinal virtue of the country is cleanliness; the deities adored, Mercury and Plutus; but as for Apollo and the Nine Sisters, one never hears them named.

Their school of painting deserves to be viewed, in order to have an idea of the height to which the mechanism of the art may be carried. Their finish is much more perfect than that of the Italians; but as they only servilely copy an ungrateful nature, one of their pictures never makes us wish to see it again. Their absolute want of taste makes them despise all that belongs to the Italian school; the antique is with them a term of ridicule; and if an artist were to work there

there on these ideas, he would die of hunger. In a cabinet at Amsterdam I recollected what Lewis XIV. said of a picture of a Dutch feast, full of all those disgusting ideas which accompany a drunken debauch, '*Take away those baboons.*' This expression is worthy of the age of Boileau, Moliere, and Racine, in which the imitations of beautiful and noble nature alone could please. This picture was by one of the first masters, and perfectly well painted; but if the nature that is chosen be disgusting, the more perfect the imitation is, the more offensive is the picture; and those who can admire such productions have a mean and depraved taste.

The taste of the age of Lewis XIV. no longer exists in France: The Dutch

pictures are those which are most in fashion, and they sell at Paris at incredible prices. It is shameful for the French, who are actually delicate, and who have such collections as those of Versailles, the Luxembourg, and the *Palais Royal*, to suffer themselves to be led away by a mode the most disgraceful for them that they have ever adopted.

Rubens, to whom nature by mistake gave birth in their neighbourhood, is not relished by the Dutch; and the proof of it is, no young painter imitates him. If they value his pictures, it is because they sell well; and if some of his pictures still remain among them, it is because travellers will not give six times more for them than they are worth.

There

There is one object only in this country with which you will be much pleased; that is, Sir Joseph Yorke: the King of England is well represented in all the courts that I have seen; but certainly he has no representative that does him more honour than this ambaffador. His merit alone forces from me this elogium; for he fhewed only common civilities to a man without a title, modest to an extreme, and who has little other merit than that of being highly fenfible of the merit of others.

All great men have many perfons who are envious of them; Sir Joseph Yorke ought to have more than any one elfe; but his is the *only* character in Europe againft which I have not heard a fingle word. Dignity and

good-nature are in him united in the highest degree; his conversation is most brilliant, and his manners most polite.

I have had the honour of supping in many courts; but I never saw a more magnificent entertainment than the supper which he gave to the nobility at the Hague on the 4th of June, 1777.

LETTER XI.

ROME, *October 1, 1778.*

MAGNIFICENCE, hypocrisy, and sadness, reign here: the number of fine palaces, of beautiful churches, of superb fountains, of the treasures of art, and venerable remains

remains of antiquity, give an air of grandeur to Rome which is not to be found in any other country.

The want of public entertainments, the little population in proportion to the extent of the city, and its situation, furrounded by hills which prevent a free circulation of air, added to the oppressive * weight of the *Scirocco* wind, seem to me the chief causes of its real sadness; but what increases this apparent gloom, is the air of sanctity which the Romans affect, and the general dress of the country, which is black. The habit of an abbé is the court dress; and as it is also the cheapest, every one wears it.

Every court is the abode of dissimulation; at Rome there are as

* This is the '*Plumbeus Auster*' of Horace.

many courts as cardinals; every cardinal is a kind of prince, and may become a sovereign; this reason alone may convince you that this country must have more hypocritical characters than any other.

Of all the sovereigns whom I have seen, the pope represents majesty the best; the cardinals are like Martial's epigrams; there are some good, some bad, and many indifferent. Almost all of them derive honour from their rank; the cardinal de Bernis is an exception, he does honour to the purple by his virtues and his talents.

The women are reserved in public, and in private extravagant to a degree; the prelates, effeminate; the nobility,

nobility*, illiterate; and the people,
wicked.

The studies generally pursued are,
the laws, antiquities, and divinity,
because these are the three principal
roads that here lead to fortune. A
poet is considered as a † dangerous,
or at best as an useless being; and
for this reason a poetical talent is
rather oppressed than encouraged.
Metafasio could not there find bread.

You will often have occasion to
admire the genius of Corneille for
the truth with which he has drawn
the Roman women. The assurance
of their eye, the firmness of their
step, every feature of their face, and
every movement of their body, de-

* The Duke of Cerj, the Marquis of Mac-
carani, and two or three more, are exceptions.

† *Fœnum habet in cornu, atunt.*

sinusiel

clare

clare the boldness of their souls. They have a very noble air, which is heightened by trailing robes, which they all wear, down to the women of the third degree.

The nation has something like pride, which does not displease me; it is that sort of haughtiness you see in a man of an ancient family fallen to decay. But it has a desire of disguising itself, which pleases no one. The first proverb of the country is; * *He who knows not how to dissemble, knows not how to live*; and they all know how to live. They love obscurity in every thing; and though this idea may seem to you trifling, it is not so: Rome is the worst lighted city in Europe; the

* *Chi non sa fingere, non sa vivere.*

servants do not carry flambeaux; and the first princes of the country, in other respects extremely luxurious, only carry a small dark lanthorn behind their coaches.

The Roman has naturally depth of understanding and strength of character; he is easily moved; and when he is moved, he is violent to an excess. If the dress of the country were military, as you walk the streets you would think yourself in ancient Rome; the faces that you meet so much resemble the characters that history has transmitted to us. This idea has often struck me among the men, and it is still more striking in the women. You will often say, 'There is a woman who might well be the mother of a Gracchus, and
 I ' there

* there is another who might produce
 'a Sylla!' The number of Messalinas
 is small, that of Lucretias less, and
 for * Sempronias you will find them
 rather at Naples than at Rome.

The following is a mark of national
 distinction between a Roman and a
 Neapolitan woman: a woman of Na-
 ples is less modest than one of Rome,
 and more bashful; Neapolitan women
 have been often seen to blush, but it
 is not possible to put a Roman woman
 out of countenance.

This is a slight sketch of the pre-
 sent state of that

*Rome, dont le destin dans la paix, dans la guerre,
 Est d'être en tous les temps maîtresse de la terre:*

Rome, ever doom'd by fate in peace, in war,
 To be the mistress of the world;

* *Qui sæpius petunt viros quam petuntur,*

And

And where at present

*Des prêtres fortunés foulent d'un pied tranquille
Les tombeaux des Catons et la cendre d'Emile:*

Priests; happy priests, with tranquil footsteps
tread

On tombs and ashes of the mighty dead.

But in my sketch I may easily be
mistaken; for of all the countries
that I have seen, this is the most
difficult to know.

LETTER XII.

ROME.

THE point of view from whence
is seen the most perfect union
of the sublime and beautiful in nature,
is from the top of Vesuvius. The
point of view from whence is seen
the most perfect union of the sub-
lime

lime and beautiful in art, is in the court of the Apollo of Belvedere. From the former one sees the mouth of the volcano, fields desolated by rivers of lava now frozen, a country of vineyards of considerable extent diversified by the most beautiful mixture of plains and hills, the city of Naples, the hill of Posilipo, a number of islands scattered in a vast sea, &c. &c. &c.

In the court one sees the Apollo, the Laocoon, the Antinous, and the celebrated *Torso* of Hercules *, which is called 'the *Torso* of Michael Angelo,' on account of the admiration which he had for this precious frag-

[* A mutilated antique statue, of which there are now left only the body and thighs.

Wright.]

ment.

ment. Here we see what the Greek nation was. Let me not be told of prejudice for the ancients; I have none; I only do justice to the merit of things, and it is very indifferent to me where they are found, or who are their authors. To be just, one must sometimes appear extravagant: when an object is transcendently beautiful or great, suitable encomiums ought to be given to it. The pen of man cannot do justice to the poetry of Shakspeare, to the genius of the King of Prussia, or to the works of the Greeks. Many, I know, will condemn me for this last expression; I refuse them all as judges; they will condemn me only because they do not know my subjects.

It

It is there, I say, in the Belvedere, that one sees the superiority of the Greeks to all the nations of the world. The distance that is between the Apollo, the Laocoon, and all the best works of the French and the Italians, is so great, that it is almost ridiculous to name them together.

Let the young traveller, when he views the Apollo, recollect that what he sees has been a rude block of marble. The first step for the artist was to create the character of this god. Before, therefore, the marble was touched, the sculptor had made an effort of genius, and that effort of genius was so great, that all the men who have succeeded him to this moment, have never been able to make one like it. This elogium, you say,

say, is too strong; it is not an eulogium; it is a fact that I mention: if the fact be not true, name me a statue equal in invention. Is it the * Sufanna of Fiammingo, the Justice of Gulielmo della Porta, the Santa Bibiena of Bernini†, or is it the Moses‡ of Michael Angelo? I do not believe that any man of sense will ever compare them. (The Moses is not inferior to any Italian or French statue; but if one had not seen the Torso, from which it is evident that Michael Angelo took the original idea of his statue, one

[* This statue by Du Quesnoy, surnamed il Fiammingo, or the Fleming, is in the church of S. Maria di Loreto.]

[† The master-piece of that sculptor, on the high altar of the church of St. Bibiena at Rome. *Keyser.*]

[‡ In the monument of Julius II. a statue more than twice as big as the life. *Wright.*]

G

would

would never be astonished at the invention of that production. The invention of the Apollo astonishes all men, and astonishes them in proportion to the time and attention with which they examine it.

The Apollo of Bernini, notwithstanding its faults, is a fine statue; it appears indifferent only because we compare it (often imperceptibly) with the Apollo of Belvedere. Neither is the Apollo of Bouchardon by any means an indifferent production; but compare the original French statue with the copy of the Greek statue in the gardens of Versailles, the difference is incredible; it is the difference that there is between a man and a god. We cannot tell what a heathen deity was; but we always feel, on viewing
 this

this statue, that it is the image of something more than human.

When genius is unaccompanied by taste, it is often surpris'd at missing its effect; the character created, it remained for taste to chuse a moment to shew this divinity; that moment ought to be animating and interesting; it ought to be favourable to grace, majesty, and expression; and it ought to be so chosen, that the disposition of the whole, and the distribution of each part of the statue, should seem to flow from it with simplicity and ease. The artist then has chosen the instant in which this god gives the sublimest proof of his divinity by an action of benevolence, in destroying an enemy of mankind: it is the instant after he has shot his arrow

at the serpent Python; the arrow discharged, he follows it with his eyes to observe its effect; the expression of each part of the body corresponds to that of the face; and from an idea so simple, this Grecian has been able to form a work which has obtained the applauses of all men, and has made every artist despair.

When a perfect execution is added to genius and taste, man, I think, cannot go farther. The finish of this Apollo is inconceivable, even to the most minute particulars, but the artist might almost have been excused the trouble of so perfectly completing his work; his conception is so sublime, and his distribution so happy, that they alone would have commanded the admiration of all men of all countries;

countries; and a proof of this is the homage every where paid to the casts of this breathing god.

The best way to give you an idea of the superiority of the Greek execution, is to cite you a fact. The Laocoon was found with only one arm; they wished to have another; several artists attempted it, and all failed: Michael Angelo, the boldest genius that Italy has had, who conceived the idea of placing the Pantheon in the air, and who made the dome of St. Peter's on the same dimensions *, thought that he could

[* That celebrated artist, upon hearing some persons extol the Rotonda as a work of antiquity never to be paralleled, said, that he would not only build a dome equally large, but build it in the air; and he made his assertion good.

Keysser.]

succeed in it; and after having worked at it for two years, abashed and despairing, he broke his work to pieces. Guglielmo della Porta, whose superb mausoleum in St. Peter's shews that he was an artist of the first rank, said, that 'it was impossible to make it in marble, but that he would make it in clay;' and he made the right arm in clay, as we see it at present; an incontestable proof of the unattainable perfection of the Greek execution.

I allow it to be a bad proof of our being in the right, that a celebrated man is of our opinion; but I think that every reasonable being should well examine before he determines against a judgment so solid as that of Pouffin, and a genius so bright

as

as that of Montesquieu: the former studied incessantly the best works ancient and modern, on which this was his decision: ‘ *Raphael compared with the moderns is an angel; compared with the ancients he is an ass.*’ Compare the most beautiful figure of Raphael, detached, with the Apollo, and his finest group with the Laocoon, and judge for yourself.

France has no man who does her more honour in foreign countries, or who will do her more with posterity, than Montesquieu: it is well known that he made some stay in Italy, and that he did not view objects like a superficial observer: this was his idea with regard to the Greeks; “ *Taste and the arts have been carried by them to such a height, that to think to* “ *surpass*

*“surpass them will be always not to
“know them.”*

L E T T E R XIII.

Between ROME and NAPLES.

‘**O** HUMAN life!’ exclaimed I with Gil Blas, ‘how dost thou abound with misfortunes!’ Yes, he is lost, I shall never see him more, and my loss will not afflict him less than his afflicts me. At the moment of setting out, one has a thousand things to do; and for fear that my dog should be stolen, an hour before my departure I put him into a closet, and there I forgot him.

There is no country which gives rise to so many ideas as Rome, and at leaving it I thought of all its beau-

ties ancient and modern; I thought of the poets, I thought of my * book; I often looked at the city; and I considered whether the † expression of Jugurtha was as true at present as when he used it. When my spirits were fatigued, I was going to divert myself with the conversation of my faithful companion—Ah! Heavens! I have forgot him!—I bitterly reproached myself for my giddiness and my ingratitude; I discovered a hundred methods which would have prevented my losing him; I thought of the wisdom of that expression of La Fontaine, ‘*Too much of nothing;*’ I lost him by too much care.

* Not this, another; [*Consiglio ad un giovane Poeta.*]

† *Urbem venalem cito perituram, si modo emptorem invenerit.*

During

During the remainder of my journey I thought no more of Rome; I forgot *even* my book, I forgot glory, I forgot immortality, and I thought only of my dog. All his good qualities returned to my mind; he was gentle, sprightly, loving; his careffes were sincere, and he bestowed them only on me: he had in my eyes a still farther merit, that of resembling me, he was ugly; this circumstance gave me some hope; ‘No,’ said I, ‘there are few capable of distinguishing true merit; my dog will be found to have ugly ears, and he will be restored to me.’

This idea gave me some consolation; and I wrote to my host at Rome to send him to me.

LETTER

LETTER XIV.

NAPLES, *February 3, 1779.*

IT is not surprising that Virgil should make such fine verses at Naples: the air there is so soft and so pure, the sun so brilliant and so warm, and the face of nature so rich and so diversified, that the imagination feels a vivacity and vigour which it scarce ever perceives in other countries.

I am not a poet, but I am very fond of verses, and I have never read them with more pleasure than here. Every time that I go to my window, I feel myself electrified, my spirits revive, my imagination warms, and my soul becomes susceptible of the softest and sublimest impressions. This
will

will not surprise you when I have only mentioned the objects which here present themselves to my view.

On the right is the hill of Posilipo, whose form is most agreeable; it is semi-circular, and adorned to the summit with trees and pleasure-houses; from its point, which loses itself in the sea, this mountain increases insensibly till it arrives behind the centre of Naples, and on its summit is seen a vast tower, which over-looks the city, and crowns the scene. On the left appears a chain of very high mountains which surround the other side of the gulph, and whose rugged boldness forms a most happy contrast with the elegant and cultivated beauties of Posilipo:—Shakspeare and Corneille would always have looked on
the

the side of Vesuvius; Racine and Pope on the side of Posilipo.

The Volcano is the most interesting of those mountains by its form which is a very beautiful cone, by its height, and above all by its vicinity to the city: it smokes incessantly, and seems always to threaten Naples with the fate of Sodom, to consume it with fire and brimstone. At its foot is Portici, and all along the coast are towns * hanging from the mountains which form the portion of a circle of ninety miles.

The sea is under my window; and besides the ideas which it presents itself, as the most interesting object in nature next to the sun, by its grandeur, beauty, and the variety of

* Sorrento, one of those towns, is the country of Tasso.

its appearances, it here shews all the riches of commerce by large ships which are passing every moment. I often rise before day to enjoy the breath of the morning, and the superb description which the illustrious Rousseau gives of the rising of the sun. In no horizon does he appear with so much splendor, no where else does he so well deserve the epithet of *golden* *. He rises behind Vesuvius to illuminate the pleasant hill of Posilipo, and the bosom of the most beautiful gulph in the universe, smooth as a mirror, and filled with vessels

* *Idcirco certis dimensum partibus orbem
Per duodena regit mundi sol aureus astra.*

The golden sun, through twelve bright signs
the year
Rules, and the earth in several climes divides
all

all in motion. The object which terminates the perspective is the island of Capréa, famous for the retreat of Tiberius and the rocks of the Sirens: on viewing it, one remembers that near those rocks the prudent Ulysses stopped his ears; and that, not far from hence, the less wise Hannibal gave himself up to the pleasures of harmony, and to the caresses of the seducing Camilla.

L E T T E R X V .

A FRENCHMAN is the most amiable of all men at home: why is he the least liked in foreign countries? It is because other nations

are

are jealous of the superiority of the French, and because the French traveller behaves ill in the company of foreigners. Almost all the French who travel are young; they ridicule all customs but their own, and proclaim the vices and follies of a country in the midst of its assemblies. I was this evening at the *Academia de' Cavalieri*, where all the nobility of the country meet twice a week. Enters for the first time a young French marquis, whom I had known at Rome. Before he had been there two minutes he said to me, ' Did you ever see such ' animals? What a stupid look that ' man has! My God! how awkward ' that woman is! Did you ever see a ' head so horridly dressed?' He said all this aloud; and even those who did
not

not understand him, saw by his manner that he despised them. The man who is going to execution will allow that he is a villain, that he deserves the rack; but he will never allow that he deserves contempt. The young Frenchman takes the surest method that the wit of man can devise to make himself hated: this has always given me pain, because I know that under this superficial fault he conceals a thousand good qualities; he is frivolous, light*, and self-sufficient, if you please; and that is the severest reproach his enemies can make him; but he is generous, he is frank, and he is always ready to draw his sword

* Several French officers dining at Genoa with a nobleman of that city, one of them said to him, "It is odd enough, Sir, that you are the only stranger here."

H

in

in defence of his honour, of his mistress, and of his friend. I shall be thought a Frenchman, and I am no Frenchman; I am an Englishman, and proud of being one; and at this moment I support the character of my nation, and my own, by speaking the language of truth and sincerity, in representing the French such as I have found them.

In the arts, Italy is superior to France and England: in the science of war, the Germans have the advantage of the English and French; but, on the whole, these two nations are the first in Europe, and all other nations allow their superiority. One circumstance which pleased me in France, is, that the French always told me, that, next to their own, the

English nation was the most respectable: nothing but extravagant self-love can oppose this decision: when the suffrages were collected at Athens, Aristides had the second vote of all men; every one gave his first suffrage for himself. You, who are a rational being, set aside your nation for a moment, and see how you would judge if the question turned upon yourself: if a man should say to you, ‘ I prefer myself to you, but I prefer you to all other men;’ if you were not satisfied with this opinion, you would betray an immoderate self-love, and a total ignorance of the human heart.

On my road hither, while the horses were changing, I alighted to walk a few minutes: a Frenchman is not afraid of speaking to his fellow creature,

ture, and he soon finds a subject of conversation; an officer of dragoons of that nation, who was going to Rome, and was at the post-house, came up to me, ‘ You are an Englishman, Sir?’ “ At your service.”—‘ Yours is a very ‘ respectable nation: I passed three ‘ years in England: you have depth ‘ and solidity; you are well bred, brave, ‘ magnificent’—“ And the French, Sir?” —‘ They think too much to make ‘ themselves agreeable; they are too ‘ fond of levity, trifling, and amuse- ‘ ment: when a Frenchman travels, ‘ and loses his conceit and his foppish ‘ airs, and when an Englishman ac- ‘ quires a little softness and agreeable- ‘ ness in his behaviour, they become ‘ the first men in the world.’

I send

I send you what this gentleman said to me, because I think like him.

* * * *

P. S. The Abbé Galiani has the most wit of any man in Naples, and also the most learning; Duke Clement Filomarino is the poet who has the most talents and taste; his brother studies philosophy, and has a very improved mind; both of them are extremely amiable, and very well bred; their family seems to me the most respectable in the country. The Duke della Torre, their father, has the finest gallery of paintings here.

LETTER XVI.

NAPLES.

THE Neapolitans are really good people; but, in truth, they are very barbarous: they have adopted by instinct the principles of the citizen of Geneva, and they cultivate neither the arts nor sciences, for fear of corrupting their morals. But if this nation is barbarous, do not think that it is harsh or severe, for, on the contrary, it is very good-natured, and desirous of contributing to the pleasure of foreigners: they are naturally good, but they are absolutely in the state in which nature produced them; and they perpetrate all crimes*, and

* I mistake; a rape was never heard of at Naples.

are

are guilty of all sorts of rudeness, without thinking they have done ill: having no education, they have no principle of any kind. A man of the first quality will tread on your toes, and not make you the least apology: be acquainted with him the next day, he cannot do enough to oblige you; he will carry you to a concert, he will offer you his box at the theatre, he will do all he knows, but he knows little. It is the same with the women; they have all an inclination to be amiable; it is a pity they don't know how.

The race of Sirens* is not yet extinct here; there are many young women

* These Sirens sometimes change into Harpies; but these metamorphoses seldom happen except in the magic land of the opera—

women who sing divinely: of Circes there are scarce any; but we see in the assemblies several of the companions of Ulysses. The easiness of the women and the *Scirocco* enervate the bodies of the men, and music enervates their souls, so as to render useless all the bounties which nature has lavished on this charming country. In no other place will be found more natural talents, or more circumstances favourable to the arts; but the causes above-mentioned, added to the indolence inspired by the climate, and the absolute want of Mæcenases,

— *Virginei vultus, fœdissima ventris
Proluvies, unæque manus,*

With virgin faces, but with wombs obscene,
Foul paunches, and with ordure still unclean,
With claws for hands, and looks for ever lean.

Dryden,

cenases, render Naples as savage as Russia; and a kind of proof of it is, that all the Russians who come hither are struck with the resemblance between the Neapolitans and their countrymen.

When a Neapolitan woman has no child, she is a very miserable being; for, having no resource in herself, she dies of *ennui*: when she has none, you may be sure it is not her fault, for the only idea which they have in their heads is that of love; and the only subjects on which they can talk are their children, their nurses, their lovers, or their hair-dressers. I have often regretted that these women have no knowledge, for whatever they know they tell with astonishing freedom and simplicity. I was
fitting

sitting by one of them at their grand assembly; I had seen her only once before, but I had not spoken to her; a *Soprano* had just finished an air, and I said to the lady, 'That man has sung well.' "It is not a man," said she, "It is a *Musico*: he has sung very well, and he is the lover of that dutchess whom you see yonder."—"Is it possible?"—"It is true; she has had a number of lovers, *Cavalieri, Cocchieri, Abbati**, at present she will have none but *Musici*." "Oh!" replied I, 'that is shameful!' "Yes," answered she, "she is too inconstant;" *è troppo volubile* was her phrase.

I asked another, whom I had known some time, how many lovers she had,

* Gentlemen, Coachmen, Abbés.

four or five? She assured me, with a most serious air, that she had not had one for three weeks. Do not be surprised at my question to this lady, it was in order to make my court to her: A Neapolitan lady is vain of the number of her adorers; and I have seen some come into company with a train of five. In general, there are not more than two of them that are the well-beloved; the others are only kept as slaves for parade.

* * * *

P. S. I think, that when I marry, I shall chuse an ugly wife, that, if I should lose her, I may be sure to recover her. My dog has been sent me: what rejoicings on both sides!

O qui complexus, O gaudia quanta fuere!

LETTER

LETTER XVII.

NAPLES.

THE king of Spain said that
 ‘every prince of the house of
 ‘Bourbon must be passionately fond
 ‘of women or of hunting:’ his Sici-
 lian majesty is very fond of hunting;
 he scarce passes a day in the midst of
 summer, or in the sharpest colds of
 winter, without partaking of it.
 During my residence at Naples, he
 retired for two months to Caserta, on
 purpose to hunt, which gave concern
 to all the English, as that deprived
 us of the society and house of Sir
 William Hamilton, who went also to
 Caserta, for the king never goes a
 hunting without him; and he is so
 fond

fond of the company of that minister, that it was with difficulty he obtained leave from his majesty to come for one day only to Naples to give a dinner to his countrymen: I dined there the forty-sixth Englishman.

If I say nothing to you concerning Vesuvius, it is because Sir William Hamilton has left nothing to be desired on that subject. His letters, more satisfactory than those of Pliny, will instruct you in a short time, and with pleasure: they are written with clearness and precision, and with that noble simplicity which distinguishes their author in all the situations of life.

During the stay at Caserta, the queen lost her eldest son; he was a prince of five years of age, a charming boy.

boy. Her majesty was in the eighth month of her pregnancy; twenty-four hours before his death, she had been assured that he was out of danger; you may judge how severe a stroke this must be to a tender mother; and she was very near sinking under it. These circumstances alone were sufficiently trying; but there was one dreadful moment which all but killed her. The young prince had seemed better for a day, but all on a sudden he was seized with a convulsion fit: one of his women, a German, as she was running to call assistance, hit her head against a door half open, gave herself a large wound in her forehead, and fell backward in a swoon: the convulsions increased, and a second woman, a German also, ran to hasten the

the physician ; on her way she found the first woman in a swoon and covered with blood ; she thought her dead, and the fright made her also fall into a swoon : the wind was very high, and, by what accident is not known, the roof of the prince's house took fire ; the queen arrived at that instant, found these two women in this situation, her son in agonies, and the palace in flames. Half an hour after the prince died *.

L E T.

* Every step of my travels has given me fresh occasion to admire the truth with which Shakspeare has painted all the objects in nature, and all the situations of human life. The queen afflicted herself for several days ; and a lady of the court told me that she often exclaimed, " Ah ! if my son had not been pretty, my loss would have been less severe ; but it was the most charming child ! " These are almost word for word the same expressions which Shakspeare has made a queen in *King John* utter in the same situation :

" Con-

LETTER XVIII.

ROME.

THERE is not a river in Europe less beautiful than the Tiber, nor a character in history more dreadful than that of Augustus. There is however no river whose sight is more interesting; and few names inspire more admiration than that of this emperor. For this let both of them

*“ Constance. Had he been ugly,
Lame, foolish, crooked, swart, prodigious,
Patch’d with foul moles, and eye-offending marks,
I would not care, I then would be content:
But since the birth of Cain, the first male-child,
To him that did but yesterday fusture,
There was not such a gracious creature born.”*

And a little after,

*“ Therefore never, never
Must I behold my pretty Arthur more.”*

thank Horace and Virgil; it is owing to the choice of their language, and to the harmony of their verses, that the Tiber is not seen with disgust, and that the name of Augustus does not inspire us with horror and sadness. How sensible has the Great Frederick been of this truth! and with how much address has he attached those French and Italian writers who will be read with the greatest pleasure as long as these two languages exist! In a thousand years the cries of widows, and the complaints of orphans, will be no longer heard; all the horrors which his wars have occasioned will be forgotten; and nothing will remain of him but the rapid and irresistible conqueror, the just and beneficent king, the patron

of learning and arts, the great poet,
the profound philosopher, the able
politician, and the amiable compa-
nion, who was the delight of the
choicest society of his age.

The king of Prussia has never
thought but of futurity, and he has
insured the admiration of posterity
by his poetry, by his prose, and by
his actions. But how has he taken
care to fortify his triple immortality
by the graces of a Voltaire, and the
elegance of an Algarotti! You may
see by what he makes Glory say to a
sage who had gained her temple, that
this divinity has always been the
sole object of his worship:

*La Déesse, approuvant l'effort de son courage,
Lui dit, "Sagez heureux, jouissez du partage
" De ces esprits actifs, auteurs, rois, et guerriers;
" Le repos est permis, mais c'est sous des lauriers."*

The goddess, with his courage pleas'd,
 "Be happy," cried, "the lot enjoy
 Of those brave spirits, authors, warriors,
 kings;
 "Repose you may, but in a laurel shade."

His ode on glory shews both the
 fire of his imagination, and the ruling
 passion of his soul;

Take the first lines;

*Un Dieu s'empare de mon âme,
 Je sens un céleste ardeur;
 O Gloire! ta divine flamme
 M'embrase jusqu'au fond de la cœur.*

A Deity my soul invades,
 A warmth divine I feel;
 O Glory! thy celestial flame
 My heart's recesses burns.

And the last stanza;

*O Gloire! à qui je sacrifie
 Mes plaisirs et mes passions,
 O Gloire! en qui je me confie,
 Daigne éclairer mes actions.*

*Tu peux, malgré la mort cruelle,
 Sauver une foible étincelle
 De l'esprit qui réside en moi.
 Que ta main m'ouvre la barrière;
 Et prêt à courir ta carrière,
 Je veux vivre et mourir pour toi.*

Glory! to whom I sacrifice
 My pleasures and my passions too,
 Glory! in whom I trust, O deign
 To set my deeds in perfect day:
 'Thou of the spirit, that resides
 Within this clay, one feeble spark,
 In spite of cruel death, canst save.
 O let thy hand the gate unbar,
 And, ready thy career to run,
 I'll live and die for thee.

L E T T E R X I X .

ROME.

AT Rome, as well as in all the
 other countries that I have seen,
 the French houses are the most agree-
 able.

able. The Cardinal de Bernis has a large assembly once a week, and he gives a dinner every day. The Bailiff de la Brillanne, ambassador from Malta, also frequently gives dinners; he is very affable, and has an excellent cook. His brother had sent him a service of china, which was made on purpose for him, with his arms; an English frigate took the French ship in which was the china, and the loss was the more grievous as he was the ambassador of a neutral power. Three days after his receiving this news, I had the honour to dine with him, and he loaded me with civilities: I mention this as a stroke that characterises his nation.

Of all the great assemblies here, that of Monseigneur de Bayanne, au-

ditor of the rota of France, has the most amusements; a table of *Bocetti* in one room; in another literature, politics, news, are the subjects of discourse; and in a third, you will find one of the best concerts in Italy, a superb orchestra, and the first fingers of both sexes in Rome. You will find at his dinners French fare, French gaiety, French politeness. The master of the house is truly amiable; I only find one fault in him, and that is not generally the fault of a Frenchman; he is more fond of hearing than of talking. One sees that this is owing to his extreme politeness, but one don't suffer the less, as he never opens his mouth but to say something agreeable or profound. A Frenchman talks better than other men;

men; I have not known one of his countrymen express themselves with more purity, more clearness, or more elegance: his taste in letters is sure; I have seen few persons in my travels so interesting as he is.

Colonel de Bayanne, his brother, is polite, agreeable, good-natured; he loves the arts, and amuses himself with painting very pretty pictures.

Does it appear to you to be of little importance that I point out to you what is most interesting in a country, and that I save you the trouble and the time of discovering it yourself? Be sure then not to leave Rome without being introduced to the Marchioness de Bocca-Paduli: her assembly is the most agreeable and the best chosen in Rome: among

other persons of merit you will there meet the Count de Verri, a Milanese* gentleman, who is full of politeness, taste, and talents: The lady of the house will please you extremely, for she is witty, well-made, and amiable as a Frenchwoman.

I have pleasure in speaking of persons whom I can praise with truth: Here then follows an English lady, who has done great execution here and at Naples: she has vivacity and uncommon judgment; has read much, and assumes nothing: I have scarce seen a young lady so well educated, or so desirous of instruction. She speaks Italian well, French perfectly; she is passionately fond of paintings

* I must tell you here, in regard to the Milanese, that the Lombard heart is proverbially good in Italy.

and

and antiques, and she draws very prettily; but her most distinguished accomplishment is music: Millico, who has the most taste of any singer in Italy, has been her master; and she has profited by his instructions so much, that I have seen her several times enchant the most critical judges of Rome and Naples.

I met a young Frenchman at Turin, who had heard her sing at Rome, and who was a passionate admirer of the Italian music; I asked him how he liked her? This was his answer:

J'entends encore sa voix, ce langage enchanteur,
Et ces sons souverains de l'oreille et du cœur.*

Her voice, th' enchanting language, still I hear,
Those sovereign accents of the heart and ear.

* It is certain that the Italian is a divine language for poetry and music; it is better to sing than to speak: the French language is much more rapid and precise.

Add

Add to these talents, a charming shape, a most elegant and graceful manner, a complexion of a dazzling white, animated by the most beautiful carnation in the world, two eyes full of softness and spirit, and seventeen years of age, and you have the portrait of Lady Louisa Nugent.

Perhaps you may be tempted to suspect that this is a fancy-piece rather than a copy from nature. I assure you it is as true a portrait as ever was painted by Titian or Vandyck; and the proof of it is that this young lady captivated three nations; the Italians were enchanted with her, '*aveva tanto briö, et tante buone maniere**;' the French, '*elle*

* 'She had so much vivacity and politeness,'

‘*étoit si jolie et si aimable*†;’ and the English, ‘*she was so modest and so sensible*.’

L E T T E R XX.

ROME.

I frequented the men of letters here, as I do every where, particularly the poets. It is incredible, that with such parts as the Italians have, they should be so much behind other nations in their poetical knowledge: they have an obstinate blindness in favour of their poets, of which I do not think they will ever be cured. The *Bolge* of Dante, and the extravagances of Ariosto, are the objects of

* ‘*She was so pretty and so amiable.*’
their

their idolatry; and, in spite of reason and common sense, they prefer those absurdities to the finest productions of all other nations. Dante, according to them, is the first of all men; and Ariosto, whom they own to be inferior to Dante, is infinitely above Homer. After having read the *Divina Comedia*, and the *Orlando Furioso*, I began to give my opinion of them according to the ideas established in my country *, in France, and in all places

[* It is by no means so decided a point as this author ventures to assert, that Dante and Ariosto are not ranked among the first of poets even 'in this country;' and if in some well-known passages the former has equalled any poet of any age, his abilities must be allowed equal to his best lines. Ariosto, however, adopts a different plan; ridicule, satire, wit, and humour, with every romantic extravagance of an unconfined genius, an imagination without controul, and almost without equal, spread such a variety over his work, that

places where there are men of taste.
 I spoke the language of reason, the
 Italian

that no reader can be weary through the lecture of XLVI Cantos, and while romance and whim declare the poem often comic rather than heroic, there are parts which no human power has ever yet excelled, as must be acknowledged by the impartial judge, who will, in spite of modern fine-drawn criticism, avow his real feelings through the rise and progress of Orlando's madness, for which the whole seems to have been written; the reader is led on with the enamoured hero, by degrees feels all his weight of woes, and scarcely wonders at any extravagance they produce. No poet has more naturally, more pathetically, painted every stage and every effect of that incomprehensible distemper ravaging a strong mind in a most athletic body. In other parts every other passion may be found as well displayed; and in the character of Bradamante, in particular, every virtue, every charm, that can captivate a reader, for womanhood, in her most amiable appearance, is, with every refinement of sentiment, preserved through the whole character; and each character stands in the work as precisely distinguished from all others as even those of Homer. The faults which none dare justify, and none can desire to excuse, are where indecent and gross ideas are let loose on the reader,

Italian poets were not used to it; they
declared war against me: I quitted
their

reader, but with so much wit, humour, and vivacity, that no one, it is supposed, ever could stop and pass over his exceptionable cantos, though the whimsical author warns his reader, and particularly announces to the fair, that they should not and need not read such passages. And, after all, it has been suggested, particularly by the late ingenious Mr. Hawkins Browne, with great appearance of probability, that the whole design of the author was to ridicule romances, and that he is in heroic poetry what Cervantes is in prose; and that even the Italians, who almost idolise their Furioso, saw not that admirable design throughout the whole performance, which alone can excuse the extravagant flights and comic absurdities every where interspersed, while the genius that gives these proofs of a most powerful imagination, proves likewise that he had power to have elevated his poem to any height he had chosen. Mr. Browne, who was an excellent judge, because he was superior to all little prejudices and minute criticisms, held Ariosto in the highest estimation, and ranked him with the first of Italian poets. For wherever the pathetic, the animated, the terrible, the descriptive, or the plaintive, give opportunities for the Muse to expatiate, her powers are unquestionable.

their society; and I thought I should do service to poetry, by publishing a book in Italian; in which I endeavoured to shew young poets the principles on which they ought to compose: I told them that nature and truth were the only basis of poetry; that the Greek authors were the best models on which a young poet could form himself; that France also had some excellent authors; that Racine was as good a model as Sophocles; nable. And no less warm was this candid judge in his encomiums on Metastasio, of whose extensive genius, and chastity of style and sentiment, he had the highest opinion; and for the fertility of his imagination, and the pointed strength of his sentiments; Mr. Browne styled him the Shakspeare of Italy! It is also observable, that his language is clearer to a foreigner, and easier to be understood by a learner of Italian, than any other poet of that country, which is an undoubted proof of the purity and perfection of his poetry.]

* *Consiglio ad un giovane Poeta.*

that

that Greece had not a fabulist equal to La Fontaine, nor a comic poet so perfect as Moliere; that Horace, Longinus, and Boileau, were the best critics that ever existed, and that nothing which was not conformable to their principles was good. I sought only the progress of the art among men who are full of genius, and who have a divine poetical language, but who know not what to do either with the one or the other. I allowed that these three critics would have been charmed with the beauties of Dante and Ariosto, taken from nature, and founded on truth; but that they would have condemned the whole of those two poems, as being contrary to reason, good sense, and consequently to good taste, and, as models,

models, dangerous to an extreme for young poets.

My book procured me some votes and many reproaches ; the poets took the alarm ; they cried that the true taste of the Italian poetry would perish, if attention were given to an *Ultramontain* (a term synonymous with them to that of barbarian).

There were so many persons who exclaimed, and they exclaimed so loudly, that I myself was beginning almost to believe that my book was good for nothing ; when one morning I found an extract of it in the *Efféméridi Letterarie* of Rome, with some remarks which did it justice ; this gave me the more pleasure, as I was an utter stranger to it till that moment, and as the article was there inserted

K

by

by the Count de Bianconi, minister from the court of Dresden, well known for his taste and talents: with this suffrage, I had ten or twelve more; that was a great deal, if you consider that at Naples I had only four: at Rome there are 200,000 inhabitants; at Naples 400,000: in those two cities I found about sixteen persons who admitted nature and truth to be the foundation of poetry, and who acknowledged Horace, Longinus, and Boileau, to be judges: of this small number, the Abbé Scarpelli, whom you have heard mentioned as one of the best poets of the Arcadia, was one: this is a sonnet which he sent me, and which I insert here, lest you should not have seen it at the end of the third edition of my book, where it is placed.

ALL'

ALL' ERUDITISSIMO *Signor*

SHERLOCK.

SONETTO.

Chi pon silenzio in Pindo al turbin roco

Di vuoti di ragion carmi fonanti?

Chi sull' are del gusto avviva il foco

Dal cener freddo che premealo innanti?

Sei tu, faggio SHERLOCK, che prese a gioco

Le magic' opre e i favolosi incanti,

Fai che a NATURA e a VERITA dian loco.

L'alte follie de' Paladini erranti:

Tu diffipi i Danteschi, orror segreti,

Che in Ausonia finor culto divino

Ebber dai troppo creduli Poeti;

Onde il guardo volgendo al suol Latino

Flacco e Boileau, fatti per te più lieti;

Ecco, gridano, Italia, il tuo Longino.

Dell' Abbate Antonio Scarpelli,

Sotto-Custode d'Arcadia in Roma.

Imité librement.

Qui fait taire ces sons qu'un vain delire enfante?
 Qui rallume du gout le flambeau pâlisant?
 C'est toi, SHERLOCK; par toi la raison triomphante
 Voit déjà parmi nous son culte renaissant.

Epris du Ferrarois, son exemple infidèle,
 Egaroit notre esprit sur sa trace emportée;
 Ton ouvrage à nos yeux offre un autre modele
 Celui de la NATURE et de la VERITÉ.

Horace en tes écrits reconnoit son génie,
 Despréaux applaudit à ton gout sûr et fin;
 Tous deux ont dit, "O bords de l'antique Ausonie,
 Bords heureux, vous aussi, vous avez un Longin."

To the most learned Signor
 SHERLOCK.

SONNET.

On Pindus' summit who allays the storms,
 The empty reasoning, of melodious bards?
 Who on the rock of taste thus nobly warms
 The frozen ashes, wont to claim rewards?

'Tis

'Tis thou, sage SHERLOCK, who hast taught our
youth

Of magic and romance to spurn the flights,
Triumphant long o'er NATURE and o'er TRUTH

In the mad follies of advent'rous knights:

Thou Dante's secret horrors canst disperse,
Crown'd in Ausonia by the sons of verse,

Too weak and credulous, with wreaths divine:
Whence turning to the Latian shore, we see
Horace, Boileau, made more renown'd by thee;
A new Longinus, Italy, is thine.

The Abbé Antonio Scarpelli,

Under-keeper of the Arcadia in Rome.

You have here a great deal of me
and my book: but allowance must
be made for the vanity of an author:
I always had self-love enough, and
since I am printed, I perceive I have
much more.

K₃

LET.

LETTER XXI.

ROME.

Je ne vous passe rien si vous n'êtes Grand Homme;
 Unless you're great, I will forgive you nothing:

THAT is well said, and it is a great man who says it: But if you are a great man—one ought to blush at being able to discover an expletive in Corneille, or a pun in Shakspeare, when both are furrounded by a crowd of beauties: this is one of the subjects on which I have had occasion to be dissatisfied with the French; they were always calumniating Shakspeare, and I should have suffered much less if they had attacked myself. Nature never produced a poet equal to him; Homer approaches the nearest to him, but

at a great * distance: you smile; but a moment ago, say you, I condemned the Italians for the extravagance of their prejudices in favour of Dante; and now I am guilty of the same crime, and from the same cause, an excess of national self-love. I did not presume to condemn Dante on my own ideas: much less do I presume to exalt Shakspeare on my own judgment: I would not admit the Italians as judges of Dante, nor the English as judges of Shakspeare; I summon them both to the tribunal of Longinus, Horace, and Boileau; and I would have each of them hold the rank which shall be granted him by the united decision of those critics.

* *Proximus . . . sed longo proximus intervallo.*

It would be wronging me to think that I would exclude a nation from judging of its own poets. When men have their taste formed on sure principles, those of the same country are unquestionably the best judges of their authors; but a Russian, well acquainted with the poets and critics of Greece, Rome, and France, would judge with more certainty of the merit of Racine, than a Parisian, born with equal talents, but who had not cultivated them.

Thus it was that I reasoned with the French in favour of Shakspeare: an English youth goes to school at eight years of age; he stays there till sixteen; he then passes five years at the university: during that time he only studies the Greek, Latin, and French

French authors, and the sciences; for an Englishman does not make a study of his own language, the only essential defect in his education. At the age then of one-and-twenty, deeply read in the ancient authors, and with his taste formed on the principles of Horace, Longinus, and Boileau, he begins to read Shakspeare; the English nation is reckoned to have judgment, and this is their education; in two hundred years, there has not been a single voice in this country against this poet: I then quoted to them this passage of Longinus, in the words of Boileau: “ When in a great number
 “ of persons of different professions
 “ and ages every one has been affected
 “ in the same manner, this uniform
 “ opinion and approbation of so many
 “ minds,

“ minds, in other respects so discor-
 “ dant, is a certain and undoubted
 “ proof that there is there something
 “ of the marvellous and the great.”

All this did not convince them;
 a Frenchman does not like reason-
 ing; he has always answered me by a
bon mot.

The enlightened Italians will own,
 allowing all the merit of Dante, that
 his poem is the worst that there is
 in any language: when we think of
 the age in which he lived, the poet
 must be deemed a prodigy; when we
 read his poem at present, it must be
 considered as a mass of various kinds
 of knowledge gothickly heaped toge-
 ther, without order and without de-
 sign. Take away from the *Divine*
Comedy five or six beautiful passages,
 and

and four or five hundred fine verses; what remains is only a tiffue of barbarisms, absurdities, and horrors.

And had not Shakspeare faults? He had many and great ones: he wrote ten volumes of plays, he wrote for the stage, and he was obliged to flatter the taste of his age, which was bad, — Therefore the merit of Shakspeare and that of Dante are equal; they both had sublime beauties and great faults:—There is only this difference, that the grand passages of the Italian poet are reducible to the narration of Count Ugolino, the history of Francesca di Rimini, the description of the arsenal of Venice, and two or three more; and that the grand passages of Shakspeare are innumerable; that in Dante we shall
find,

find, in three pages, four beautiful lines; and that in Shakspeare we shall find, in four pages, six lines that are not beautiful.

This poet gained by his talents the patronage of sovereigns, and the friendship of nobles; he was celebrated with emulation by all the poets his contemporaries and his successors; an incontestable proof that a genius so rare was even superior to envy.

The best pieces of Shakspeare have faults; but each of his good ones seems to me to resemble the church of St. Peter: this temple, the most wonderful in the world, has a thousand faults, a thousand bad things in sculpture, painting, &c. &c. but I pity the man who thinks of looking
for

for them: when a fault presents itself, let him advance a step farther; a sublime beauty expects him.

These ideas struck me this morning while I was walking in this church: I went thither with a Pole, a Frenchman, and an Englishman: the Englishman looked for beauties; the Frenchman for faults; the Pole looked for nothing. When we were at the end of the church, 'Behold,' says the Frenchman, 'that *Charity* of Bernini, how wretched it is! the air of her head is affected, her flesh is without bone, and she makes frightful faces.' "These remarks appear to me just enough," replies the Englishman, "but, look on the other side of the altar, you will see one of the finest pieces of mo-

“dern sculpture, the *Justice* of Guglielmo della Porta.” ‘You are in the right,’ says the Frenchman (without looking at it), ‘but that child at the foot of the *Charity* disgusts me more than its mother.’ While the Englishman continued to praise the *Justice*, and the Frenchman to criticise the *Charity*, the Pole looked at the door by which we entered, and said to me, that ‘the church was much longer than he imagined.’

In passing under the dome, the boldness of Michael Angelo reminded me of the imagination of Shakspeare; and the successive impressions made on me by the *Justice*, the *Charity*, the St. Michael of Guido, the St. Jerom of Dominichino, and the Transfiguration

figuration of Raphael, were similar to those which I have often felt in reading Othello, &c. The Frenchman's delicacy often degenerates into squeamishness; he is too easily offended; and he suffers more pain from one fault than he enjoys pleasure from ten beauties. I am the friend of reason and exactness as much as Boileau was; but I can pardon some faults which are compensated by numerous and sublime beauties:

Je ne vous passe rien si vous n'êtes Grand Homme,

is the language of the King of Prussia; it is also that of Longinus; and, lest you should have forgotten the passage, take it as follows:

“ It is almost impossible for a middling genius to commit faults; for

“ as

“ as he ventures nothing, and never
 “ rises, he remains in safety; instead
 “ of which, the great man, of him-
 “ self, and by his own greatness,
 “ slips and is in danger.—Though I
 “ have remarked many faults in
 “ Homer, and in all the most cele-
 “ brated authors, and though I am
 “ perhaps the man in the world
 “ whom they please the least, I reckon
 “ that these are faults which they
 “ did not regard, and negligences
 “ which escaped them, because their
 “ genius, which only studied the
 “ great, could not dwell on little
 “ matters. In a word, I maintain
 “ that the sublime, though it does
 “ not support itself equally through-
 “ out, prevails over all the rest. In
 “ Theocritus, there is nothing but
 “ what

" what is happily imagined; but will
 " you therefore say that Theocritus
 " is a greater poet than Homer, who
 " wants order and contrivance in se-
 " veral passages of his writings; but
 " who commits this fault only on
 " account of that divine spirit which
 " hurries him away, and which he
 " cannot regulate as he would." Ah!
 if Longinus had read Shakspeare!

This principle is in like manner supported by Horace;

—*Ubi plura nitent in carmine*—

As in Shakspeare,

Non ego paucis offendar maculis;

In a work where many beauties shine,

I will not cavil at a few mistakes:

And by the bye,

Ubi pauca nitent in carmine,

as in Dante, I will not suffer myself
 to be dazzled by some shreds of
 purple. * We should have little enjoyment
 in the contemplation of the arts, or
 of nature; if we always looked for
 an exemption from faults. I do not
 ask any indulgence for Carlo Maratti;
 but woe to the man who cannot par-
 don a defect of contour in Rubens or
 Corregio!

supported by Horace;

L E T T E R XXII.

FROM THE MIDDLE OF THE ALPS.

I Passed these mountains with a young
 Frenchman, who was passionately
 fond of the Italian music: when we
 arrived at our inn, we went to take

* *Purpureus pannus.*

a walk on the sides of a small lake,
 surrounded by a delightful wood:
 ‘*Parbleu,*’ said he, ‘Nature is very
 ‘ridiculous here.’—“Ha!” replied I,
 “this is something new: I have often
 “heard of the caprices of nature, but
 “you are the first who have found
 “her ridiculous.”—‘Listen!’ said he;
 (the wood resounded with the song
 of nightingales, and the lake was full
 of frogs that were croaking) ‘I have
 ‘you ever’ heard such a concert?’—
 “Yes, I have heard some Frenchmen
 “and Italian women sing together.”
 He took the joke in good part, and
 we laughed at the ridiculousness of
 nature, and of the opera-singers at
 Paris. *examine; examine* *to test* *to try*
 From the date of this letter you
 expect, no doubt, something sublime
 will

on the Alps, on Hannibal, or Livy: Not a word; it is another volume of my letters, which I am going to announce to you, on the northern parts of Italy, which are much more cultivated in every respect than those of the south, on the other German courts, &c. &c. — But lest I should not fulfil this threat, let me tell you at present, that of all the princes whom I have seen, he that pleases me the most is Prince * Ernest of Mecklenburgh-Strelitz; and that Venice seems to me the Athens of Italy. You have a fine opportunity of determining this last idea in *the Tribune* at Florence, by comparing the Venus of Titian with that of Medicis; examine them both with attention, and you will

[* Third brother to the Queen of England.]

allow that no impartial person can prefer the work of the Grecian artist to that of the Venetian*. If you wish to have other proofs, I cite the general turn of mind and manners of the inhabitants; and I add to the name of Titian those of Palladio, Maffei, and Algarotti.

As to Prince Ernest, I think him every thing that can be desired in a prince; and if you would have a proof of that, go to Zell.

[* But, it may be asked, how can a statue be well compared with a picture, especially of a master whose drawing is generally thought defective, and whose chief excellence is his colouring? and besides, the Venus of Titian, I apprehend, is cumbent.]

allow that no impartial person can
 LETTER XXIII.

to that of the Venetian. If you
 FERNEY, April 26, 1776*.

THE Marquis d'Argens, of An-
 goulême, gave me a letter to
 M. de Voltaire, with whom he is in-
 timately acquainted. Every one re-
 commended by M. d'Argens is sure to
 be well received at Ferney: M. de
 Voltaire treated me with great civi-
 lity; my first visit lasted two hours,
 and he invited me to dinner the next
 day. Each day, when I left him, I
 went to an inn, where I wrote down
 the most remarkable things that he
 had said to me; here they are.

* The reader sees the reason why I have not
 placed my letters in chronological order; and if
 he does not see it, it is no matter.

He

He met me in the hall; his nephew,
 M. d'Hornois, counsellor in the par-
 liament of Paris, held him by the
 arm; he said to me, with a very
 weak voice, "You see a very old
 "man, who makes a great effort to
 "have the honour of seeing you;
 "will you take a walk in my gar-
 "den? It will please you, for it is
 "in the English taste; it was I who
 "introduced that taste into France;
 "and it is become universal; but the
 "French parody your gardens, they
 "put thirty acres in three." *vd hotel*
 I From his gardens you see the Alps,
 the Lake, the city of Geneva, and
 its environs, which are very pleasant.
 He said, "*It is a beautiful prospect*;"
 he pronounced these words tolerably
 well. *the man said to me*
blond

S. How long is it since you were in England?

V. Fifty years at least.

His Nephew. It was at the time when you printed the first edition of your *Henriade*.

We then talked of literature; and from that moment he forgot his age and infirmities, and spoke with the warmth of a man of thirty. He said some shocking things against Moses and against Shakspeare.

N. Shakspeare is detestably translated by M. de la Place. He has substituted de la Place to Shakspeare. I have translated the three first acts of Julius Cæsar with exactness: a translator should lose his own genius, and assume that of his author. If the author be a buffoon, the translator should

should be so too: Shakspeare always had a buffoon; it was the taste of the age, which he took from the Spaniards: the Spaniards had always a buffoon; sometimes it was a god, sometimes a devil; sometimes he prayed, at other times he fought.

We talked of Spain.

V. It is a country of which we know no more than of the most savage parts of Africa, and it is not worth the trouble of being known. If a man would travel there, he must carry his bed, &c. When he comes into a town, he must go into one street to buy a bottle of wine, a piece of a mule in another, he finds a table in a third, and he sups. A French nobleman was passing through Pampe-luna: he sent out for a spit; there

was

was only one in the town, and that was borrowed for a wedding. I had
 an *His Nephew*. That is a village which
 M. de Voltaire has built! : *admirable*
Yes; we are free here; cut off
 a little corner, and we are out of
 France. I asked some privileges for
 my children here, and the king has
 granted me all that I asked, and has
 declared the country of Gex free from
 all the taxes of the farmers-general;
 for that salt, which formerly sold for
 ten sols a pound, now sells for four.
 I have nothing more to ask—except
 to live no one of them on, *admirable*

We went into the library. *admirable*
There are several of your coun-
trymen (he had Shakspeare, Milton,
Congreve, Rochester, Shaftesbury, Bol-
ingbroke, Robertson, Hume, &c.)

Robertson is your Livy; his Charles V. is written with truth. Hume wrote his history: to be applauded, Rapin to instruct; and both obtained their ends.

S.: You knew lord Chesterfield?

V. Yes, I knew him; he had a great deal of wit.

S. You know lord Hervey*?

V. I have the honour to correspond with him.

S. He has talents.

V. As much wit as Lord Chesterfield; and more solidity.

S. Lord Bolingbroke and you agreed that we have not one good tragedy.

V. True; Cato is incomparably well written: Addison had much taste, but the abyss between taste, and genius is immense. Shakspeare had an amazing

* Now Earl of Bristol.

never

genius,

genius, but no taste; he has spoiled the taste of the nation; he has been their taste for two hundred years; and what is the taste of a nation for two hundred years, will be so for two thousand: this taste becomes a religion; and there is in your country a great many fanatics in regard to Shakspeare.

S. Were you personally acquainted with Lord Bolingbroke?

V. Yes; his face was imposing, and so was his voice; in his works there are many leaves, and little fruit; distorted expressions, and periods intolerably long.

“There,” said he, “you see the Alcoran, which is well read at least:” it was marked throughout with bits of paper: “there are *Historic Doubts* by Horace Walpole” (which had also several

several marks) “ here is the portrait
 “ of Richard III *; you see, he was a
 “ handsome youth.”

S. You have built a church?

V. True; and it is the only one in
 the universe in honour of God†; you
 have churches built to St. Paul, to
 St Genevieve, but not one to God.

This is what he said to me the
 first day. You did not expect any
 connection in this dialogue, because I
 only put down the most striking things
 that he said. I have perhaps mangled
 some of his phrases; but, as well as
 I can recollect, I have given his own
 words.

* In the frontispiece, [drawn by Vertue and
 engraved by Grignion. Mr. Walpole purchased
 this drawing at Vertue's sale. Whence it was
 taken is not known, probably from some painted
 window.]

† The inscription was, *Deo erexit Voltaire.*

THE next day, as we sat down to dinner, he said, "We are here for liberty and property*. This gentleman† is a Jesuit, he wears his hat: I am a poor invalid, I wear my night-cap."

Who never said a foolish thing,
Nor ever did a wise one t.

* In the multiplicity, drawn by Verne and engraved by Gignion. Mr. W alpole purchased this drawing at Verne's sale. *Millon* 1820.

[† Lord Rochester on King Charles II.]

But

But, speaking of Racine, he quoted
these two;

The weighty ballion of one sterling line,
Drawn to French wire would through whole
pages shine*.

S. The English prefer Corneille to
Racine.

V. That is because the English are
not sufficiently acquainted with the
French tongue to feel the beauties of
Racine's style, or the harmony of his
versification: Corneille ought to please
them more, because he is more striking;
but Racine pleases the French, because
he has more softness and tenderness.

S. How did you find the English
fare †?

V. Very

[* Lord Roscommon's Essay on Translated
Verse. English Poets, vol. X. p. 215.]

[† In the original it is, "Comment avez vous
trouvé la chere Angloise" [the English cheer].

Voltaire

N. Very fresh and very white.

It should be remembered, that when he made this pun upon women, he was in his eighty-third year.

S. Their language?

V. Energetic, precise, and barbarous; they are the only nation that pronounces their A, E.

He related an anecdote of Swift: "Lady Carteret, wife of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in Swift's time, said to him, The air of this country is good." Swift fell down on his knees, 'For God's sake, madam, don't say so in England; they will certainly tax it.'

He afterwards said, that "though he could not perfectly pronounce Voltaire jocularly answers as if it were '*chair*, '*flesh*.' The translator has endeavoured to retain the pun.]

" English,

“English, his ear was sensible of the
 “harmony of their language and of
 “their versification; that Pope and
 “Dryden had the most harmony in
 “poetry, Addison in prose.”

V. How have you found the French?

S. Amiable and witty: I only find
 one fault with them; they imitate
 the English too much.

V. How! do you think us worthy
 to be originals ourselves?

S. Yes, Sir.

V. So do I too; but it is of your
 government that we are jealous:

S. I have found the French more
 free than I expected.

V. Yes, as to walking, or eating
 whatever he pleases, or lolling in his
 elbow-chair, a Frenchman is free
 enough; but as to taxes—Ah! Sir,

M

you

you are happy, you may do any thing; we are born in slavery, and we die in slavery; we cannot even die as we will, we must have a priest.

Speaking of our government, he said, "the English sell themselves, which is a proof that they are worth something: we French do not sell ourselves; probably because we are worth nothing."

S. What is your opinion of the Eloïse?

V. It will not be read twenty years hence.

S. Mademoiselle de l'Enclos has written good letters.

V. She never wrote one; they were by the wretched Crebillon.

"The Italians," he said, "were a nation of brokers; that Italy was
"an

“an old wardrobe, in which there
 “were many old cloaths of exquisite
 “taste. We are still,” said he, “to
 “know whether the subjects of the
 “Pope or of the Grand Turk are the
 “most abject.”

He talked of England and of Shakespeare; and explained to Madam Denis part of a scene in Henry V, where the King makes love to Queen Catherine in bad French, and of another in which that Queen takes a lesson in English from her waiting-woman, and where there are several very gross double-entendres, particularly on the word ‘*foot*’; and then addressing himself to me, “But see,” said he, “what
 “it is to be an author; he will do any
 “thing to get money.”

V. When I see an Englishman sub-

tle and fond of law-suits, I say, 'There
 ' is a Norman, who came in with
 ' William the Conqueror?' When I
 see a man good-natured and polite,
 ' that is one who came with the Plan-
 ' tagenets;' a brutal character, ' that
 ' is a Dane;' for your nation, as well
 as your language, is a medley of
 many others.

After dinner, passing through a
 little parlour, where there was a
 head of Locke, another of the Coun-
 tess of Coventry, and several more, he
 took me by the arm, and stopped me
 —“Do you know this bust* ; it is
 “ the greatest genius that ever ex-
 “ isted: if all the geniuses of the
 “ universe were assembled, he should
 “ lead the band.”

* It was the bust of Newton.

It

It was of Newton, and of his own works, that he always spoke with the greatest warmth.

L E T T E R XXV.

IF you have not time to read a short detail of trifling circumstances relating to Voltaire, pass this letter.

His house is convenient, and well furnished; among other pictures is the portrait of the Empress of Russia, and that of the King of Prussia, which was sent him by that monarch, as was also his own bust in Berlin porcelain, with the inscription IMMORTALIS.

His arms are on his door, and on all his plates, which are of silver: at the desert, the spoons, forks, and

blades of the knives, were of silver gilt: there were two courses, and five servants, three of whom were in livery: no strange servant is allowed to enter.

He spends his time in reading, writing, playing at chess with Father Adam, and in looking at the workmen building in his village.

The soul of this extraordinary man has been the theatre of every ambition: he wished to be a universal writer; he wished to be rich; he wished to be noble; and he has succeeded in all.

His last ambition was to found a town; and if we examine, we shall find that all his ideas tended to this point. After the disgrace of M. de Choiseul, when the French ministry had laid aside the plan of building

a town at Verfoix, in order to establish a manufactory there, and to undermine the trade of the people of Geneva, Voltaire determined to do at Ferney what the French government had intended to do at Verfoix.

He embraced the moment of the dissensions in the republic of Geneva, and by fair promises he engaged the exiles to take refuge with him, and many of the malcontents followed them thither.

He caused the first houses to be built, and gave them for a perpetual quit-rent; he then lent money, by way of annuities, to those who would build themselves; to some on his own life, to others on the joint lives of himself and Madam Denis.

His sole object seemed to me to have been the improvement of this village: that was his motive for asking an exemption from taxes; that was the reason why he endeavoured every day to inveigle workmen from Geneva to establish there a manufactory of clock-making. I do not say that he did not think of money; but I am convinced that it was only a secondary object.

On the two days I saw him, he wore white cloth shoes, white woollen stockings, red breeches, with a night-gown and waistcoat of blue linen flowered and lined with yellow: he had on a grizzle wig with three ties, and over it a silk night-cap embroidered with gold and silver.

Twelve years ago he had his tomb built on the side of his church fronting his house. In the church, which is small, there is nothing extraordinary, except over the altar, where there is a single figure in gilt wood, without a cross: it is said to be himself; for it is pretended that he always had an idea of founding a religion.

L E T T E R XXVI.

“**Y**OU would publish a book,” says La Bruyere; how many critics will fall upon you! You will be called to account for your thoughts, for your phrases, for your words. “This,” you will be told, “is only proper for conversation; that is only
“used

“ used in the florid style ; this other is
 “ trite ; this last is not received : write
 “ according to the fashion, or do not
 “ write at all.”

Alas ! there am I already condemned ;
 I know nothing of the fashion, and I
 cannot keep from writing *. I can-
 not give an account either of my
 phrases, or of my words † ; much less
 of my solecisms and barbarisms : Par-
 don therefore the style, dear reader,
 and recollect that in my preamble I

* *Tantus amor scribendi me rapit.*

† I except one only ; if an expression in my
 first page be criticised, I answer that I have used
 it in its literal sense, that I know no title so glo-
 rious for a man as that of *good* ; and if the ill-
 nature and depravity of mankind have annexed
 other ideas to that word, that is not a reason why
 it should not be used in its primitive signification.
 [The reason why the author has defended this
 expression is, that *bon homme* in French has three
 significations ; it means a *good man*, a *silly good-*
natured man, and a *cuckold*. It is seldom used
 but in the two latter senses.]

promised

promised you nothing but some ideas and truth.

L E T T E R XXVII.

*Qui se peint tout en beau dans ces lieux qu'il habite,
Méconnoit la nature, et rêve en Sybarite.*

He mistakes nature who paints all things bright,
And dreams like a luxurious Sybarite.

THE philosopher of Sans-fouci is in the right; and I think I am not mistaken in saying that we ought to look on the fair side as much as we can, because it is for our happiness to do so. I wish that this system were universal, and in order to establish it, I would have every one look for the bright rather than the dark side of an object; the opposite system is that which prevails; a new
4 character

character comes into company, a new book appears, nothing is sought for in them but faults; and if one finds none, one thinks it is a proof of want of wit: I have always thought the contrary; and I think it a more certain proof of wit and taste to discover a single beauty than to point out ten faults. In your travels therefore look always for the beautiful; and when you meet a disagreeable object, turn away your head: I allow you but one exception to this rule; when a beggar presents himself, look upon him; for you can convert into pleasure the pain which the sight of him will give you, by relieving his distress.

Adieu, my dearest friend; I have travelled several years; I have seen
many

many men; and the most valuable lesson that I have learned in my travels is this: Different countries have different tastes, and different ways of thinking on various subjects: in one point they all agree, that the best letter of recommendation that a man can carry, is a GOOD HEART; and that the surest method to make himself loved and respected every where, is to DO GOOD.

F I N I S.

many more and the most valuable
 lesson that I have learned in my travels
 is this: Different countries have dif-
 ferent tastes, and different ways of
 thinking of things. In our
 point they all agree, but the better
 of recommendation that a man can
 give, is a good remark; and that
 the first method to make himself
 liked and respected every where
 is to do good.

It is to do good.

It is to do good.

It is to do good.

It is to do good.

It is to do good.

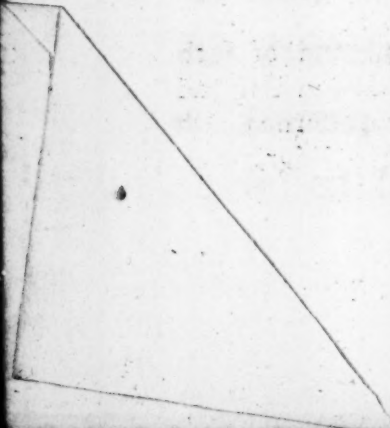
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It is to do good.

It is to do good.

It is to do good.

It is to do good.



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